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KEY TO LIVING

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MURIEL WRINCH



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'Human history is not a series of secular happenings without any shape or pattern; it is a meaningful process, a significant development. Those who look at it from the outside are carried away by wars and battles, the economic disorders and the political upheavals, but below in the depths is to be found the truly majestic drama, the tension between the limited effort of man and the sovereign purpose of the universe.'

Eastern Religions and Western Thought. RADHAKRISHNAN.

'Begin to search and dig in thine own field for this pearl of eternity that lies hidden in it; it cannot cost thee too much, nor canst thou buy it too dear, for it is all; and when thou hast found it thou wilt know that all which thou hast sold or given away for it is as mere a nothing as a bubble upon the water.'

Mystical Writings. WILLIAM LAW.

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FOREWORD



Muriel Wrinch has written an important book for the cultivated reader, though even specialists may find it useful, suggesting a way of life which deals justly with the scientific outlook and the spiritual aims of our age. She echoes Plato's comment in the *Timaeus* that '... from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or ever will be given by the gods to mortal men'. Philosophy as love of wisdom is the completion of knowledge or intellectual enlightenment. Intellectual inquiry is a necessary movement in all normal spiritual life. Faith in things unscientific is not possible. It is wrong to imagine that the character of natural science as it has emerged in recent times leads necessarily to scepticism. Leaders of scientific revolution like Newton and Einstein were often religious men and they claimed to be glorifying God by expounding the processes of nature. They affirm that the Supreme is not a remote entity but a living God who can be realized by the earnest seeker. Looking upon both Western and Eastern views as regional affairs, the author provides us with a world perspective.

The scientific view of the world is not inconsistent with the reality of an eternal order. The religious creeds may be of dubious value if they are treated as

more than myths and images, hints or guesses of the deep truths of the universe. Religion deals with essential mystery which, in the last analysis, no human language can fully clothe or communicate. Religion is participation in the mystery. The author accepts the validity of the spiritual life, often called mystical, which is common to all religions. The book gives us practical suggestions for the development of the unitive life. I hope it will find many readers.

S. RADHAKRISHNAN.

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a certain nostalgia, hinting at a promise that, as it seems, can never be fulfilled. The everyday round seems pointless. Time hangs heavily on the hands, yet at the same time, paradoxically, alarms with the swiftness of its passage.

This is a mood that not only destroys all joy in living but that is disquieting in what seems, *till we understand its cause*, its utter unreasonableness. Circumstances do not influence it as much as might be expected. A new frock or a drink or a good week-end may cheer us up but all too temporarily. Our dearest wish may suddenly be granted yet, despite a surface thrill, fundamentally we remain as depleted, feel essentially as unmotivated as before—even more so, perhaps, for now there is no peg on which to hang our discontent. Sporadic effort to banish this frame of mind by will-power is seldom of much avail. A course of vitamin B or perhaps of psycho-therapy may help us upon the surface yet do little to dispel permanently a basic depression that, as one comes after a time to realize, is not entirely physical or even purely psychological in origin.

For man is a spiritual being whose contentment and health—or wholth, as the old Anglo-Saxon more comprehensively had it—depends ultimately upon the spiritual state. Body and mind are the instruments we use during this phase of our existence and the part doctor and psychologist can play in helping us to keep them up to concert pitch is not to be underrated. Both body and mind obviously exert their profound influence on our general response to life.

Yet only the spirit can create and harmonize the melody they play.

This all-important fact, the truth of which, as I hope to show, anyone can verify for himself, is too often overlooked today. Understandably—for the spiritual concept of living is too often associated either with the organized, authoritarian religion which nowadays has little to say to most of us, or perhaps with some strange new cult that taxes credulity too far. Yet surely the terms 'run down' or 'unmotivated', commonly used to describe the state of apathy and listlessness that afflicts so many of us, are significant. . . . *What* has run down? By *what* are we unmotivated?

There is no need to dwell on the nebulous sense of disharmony and unreality, on the fear of not being able to go on, that characterize lack of motivation and the feeling of futility that invariably accompanies it. Those who suffer from it know it only too well. It is worth noting, however, that though newly named and more specifically recognized today, futility feeling is no new disease. Centuries ago, the author of *Ecclesiastes*, after reviewing the various diversions of life, epitomized this frame of mind for all time when he declared, 'All is vanity'. Even during the periods of greatest apparent material security—in those comfortable Victorian days, for example, before the atomic bomb had been thought of, before the bloodless revolution had upset all pleasant preconceived ideas of right and privilege, a certain indefinable dissatisfaction was apparent. The Younger Pitt was asserting that 'All about us is ruin and despair' and

Keats was lamenting that 'But to think is to be full of sorrow'. Until he looks beyond the finite, man is always prone, and has shown the tendency throughout his history, to a sense of inadequacy and incompleteness that renders impossible the significant living for which, whether he is aware of it or not, he so deeply hungers.

Even if futility feeling is, as it appears to be, on the increase today, this is not necessarily the sign of decadence it might seem. It is not those who are completely satisfied with the material but rather those who, consciously or unconsciously, are beginning to realize that man really does not live by bread alone, who ask: 'What are we living for? What is the use of it all?'

And the answer is forthcoming!

Nine years ago, when my own mood was chronically, intolerably sterile, it was my good fortune to encounter certain teachings that so basically influenced my slant on living as to invest it, and even the most everyday facets of it, with new meaning and hence with new enduring satisfaction. Even during years of stress and strain, these teachings engendered a genuine joy in existence which *persists*, even during these days when 'crisis is every man's breakfast food'.¹ This may, I freely admit, too often be disturbed by surface ups and downs, but *never* since first contacting the line of thought I outline in the following chapters, have I felt the inner despair, devoid of solace, that had previously become almost habitual.

For these teachings provide a key which opens the

door to a world rich beyond imagining and satisfying and meaningful beyond measure.

I would like to share with others for whom the sense of meaninglessness may have become as hauntingly distressing as it was for me, basic teachings that point the way to new, enduring impetus to living. Free from the dogma that has cluttered them and that antagonizes so many of us, they provide a firm foundation for thought and resultant action. Almost as old as man himself, they are yet so enduring and alive that they need only to be brought into consciousness to engender the peace of soul so many of us are seeking. I am convinced that anyone who contacts and *meditates* upon them can find surcease from the futility feeling that renders living barren and the sense of inadequacy and spiritual malaise that accompanies it; can gradually develop a contentment progressively more immune to assault; can achieve a happiness that does not depend on 'perpetual *bonne-bouches* from Fate or gala-days from Chance'.²

It is not necessary in accepting these teachings, as really seems inevitable in accepting orthodox authoritarian religion, to discard common sense or reason nor to shut one's eyes to modern scientific trends. It is necessary to reassess current values.

Let us take a brief glance at these before considering the teachings themselves.

MURIEL WRINCH.

*Cape Town—Wilderness—Hout
Bay—Wales—Ireland—London.*

Search for Happiness

The human urge to discover perfection and meaning in life expresses itself in the universal longing for happiness. No matter how cynical and disillusioned we may appear, we never quite lose hope of attaining it, never quite despair of finding a more colourful world, 'the apples and the singing and the gold' beyond the world of everyday ups and downs. More of us than might, in these days of debunking, be expected, may be held back by a vague, inexplicable, even puritanical, sense of guilt; may feel uneasily—despite our loudest assertions to the contrary—that there is something wrong with the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. Some cling neurotically to unhappiness for lack of anything to fill the void left by its absence. Yet even these are seeking happiness in their own circuitous way and most of us are, perhaps more than ever before, in revolt against any out-dated morality that stands in the way of whatever joy in living we can still manage to retain in the challenging new world of today.

Surely justifiably? For while happiness is not an ultimate value, it is a sign of well-being, the mark of sound and healthy functioning on all levels.

It is the common ideas as to what induces and constitutes happiness that are, judging by results,

so misleading. The essential fallacy of seeking on the sense plane for a happiness the senses *alone* cannot provide is more and more clearly revealed.

Never before have so many diversions for eye and ear and palate been so freely available, yet boredom and, even more disintegrating, the fear of it, are rampant. Radio and television may provide continuous distracting background for our activities yet much of our current music is nostalgic, lamenting, as much of our current art reveals, the poverty of our inner life. Both for the most part represent rather than inspire. Cinema programmes cater for boredom with the crude and shattering intensity boredom demands; a genuine work of art, truly creative music, an occasional film of exquisite insight stand out the more clearly against the drab background of mediocrity. A glance at any newspaper, with its grim record of insensate crime, frequently provoked, apparently, mainly by the urge to violence, indicates how far the desire for mere excitement and distraction may lead.

Noise, speed, hitting the high spots—these are too often the apparent objectives of today. Few really seek the quietude so many—in theory—long for.

Not far from my cottage on the mountainside is a little bay with smooth golden sands and limpid rock pools fringed with sea anemones. Encircled by the tender peaks of the Twelve Apostles, this must surely be one of the loveliest spots in the world. During week-ends in summer, it becomes a rendezvous for sunbathers who lie prone, becoming—surely—

increasingly devitalized, all through the long hot African day, drowning the murmur of the waves with radio or gramophone. When evening, cool and tranquil, comes, they do not linger to enjoy the stillness or watch the play of moonshine and starlight on sea and mountain. . . .

The same craving for over-stimulation was recognized and catered for by those arranging tours of the Congo Caves. In the dim interior, the majestic age-old stalagmites and stalactites were clearly discernible. Yet, presumably with the idea of enhancing their attractiveness, the guide constantly flickered crude coloured lights over them.

The tormenting sense of meaninglessness underlying the ceaseless quest of sensation is but inadequately camouflaged by the characteristic jargon of the age. 'So what?' 'We haven't a clue.' Cluelessness and the fear, anxiety, restlessness and panic to which it gives rise are indeed reflected in the rocketing sales of cigarettes, sedatives and alcohol—eloquent symptoms of dis-ease.

It is easy to understand how the impulse to escape from the anxieties of life in this atomic age, from the increasing monotony of increasingly specialized jobs, from the ever-greater difficulty of making ends meet as the cost of living inexorably spirals, has stimulated an exhausting, frenetic tempo. It is obvious that modern amenities further the means of gratifying the urge to excess just at a time when many of the tabus of the past have been swept away. Yet it is equally clear that when pleasure becomes obsessive,

constituting the predominant motive for living, it inevitably quickly palls. Two cocktails are soon needed to produce the kick originally given by one. In the vain hope of restoring it, the craving for repetition grows. One cigarette is apt to intensify the desire for another—and another. Thus the basis for addiction is laid, misery-making in the extreme, since satiety sets in even while we remain in its grip.

Similarly when happiness is equated with comfort, we soon discover that any initial satisfaction that may be achieved tends to whet the appetite for more, thus progressively defeating its own ends. With all the new mechanical inventions at our disposal bringing us nearer and nearer saturation point, the truth of Tolstoi's dictum that we cannot forever continue to mistake comfort for civilization becomes increasingly obvious. One day it has been predicted, for example, whole cities may be encased in transparent media that will protect their inhabitants from the vagaries of the weather—simultaneously, of course, from the wholesome and intrinsically pleasurable stimulus of variety. Whether this idiotic idea will ever be realized in practice mercifully remains open to doubt. It remains true, however, that too much emphasis on mere facilities eventually results in a peculiarly flat and monotonous mode of living. As Emerson reminds us: 'Pleasure is taken out of pleasant things, power out of strong things, profit out of profitable things, the moment we separate them from the whole. We can no more halve things and get the sensual good by itself than we can get an

inside that has no outside or sunlight without shadow.’¹ The fact that, as the late Professor Joad pointed out, the suicide rate among the unemployed rich on the Riviera is higher than that of any other economic class, surely supports this conclusion. The life of pleasure and comfort and possession, unbalanced by more important considerations, is evidently found, too often, scarcely worth the leading.

The common tendency to fix primary standards too high, found not only among millionaires, is to emulate the ichneumon fly of Capek’s ‘Insect Play’. In selecting, like this insect, only ‘the tastiest bits’, the zest for life is destroyed in much the same way as a diet of sweets takes the edge off hunger.

The common experience that getting what we want or think we want too often proves strangely disappointing is surely very easy to understand. How can possession of static things be expected to meet the needs of a living, growing, dynamic organism? Clearly mere possession tends to fetter rather than to free, resulting, when made an end in itself, in more worry and anxiety than happiness.

Should we then deliberately deprive ourselves of things we genuinely enjoy and actually need for efficient contemporary living, merely for the sake of going without? Obviously there is no virtue in seeking discomfort for its own sake. Yet we must beware of useless accumulation, reducing our cares as we simplify our needs, distinguishing between essentials and mere incidentals, regarding possessions as the means they are instead of making them ends in

themselves. It is a matter of using things rather than being used by them.

This is as obvious from the social as from the individual point of view.

We live in an age when, theoretically, we should all be happier and healthier and better-educated than ever before. Labour-saving appliances, foods already processed and attractively packed, make everyday life easier and pleasanter. Working hours are shorter, working conditions better. Welfare schemes make for greater security. Rightly, first-rate medical and surgical treatment can be obtained by the poorest. Educational opportunities increase. There is greater chance for every child to secure what is called (surely somewhat euphemistically in view of the still extraordinarily limited nature of the process) education. That oddly named, formerly so exclusive institution, the public school, no less than the university, opens its doors ever more widely to the children of the people. Educational methods are themselves in constant process of reform and vast sums are spent on educational research.

Of course all this must have immense *potential* effect on general well-being. Health, an informed outlook and the many and varied interests that spring from this must obviously play their important and far-reaching part in creative living. Nor is interest in contemporary trends in any way to be deprecated. An interest in cars and planes can be as harmless and beneficial as an interest in collecting bird's eggs or rare folios. Yet it remains true that, as Aldous Huxley

has emphasized, neither plasticine nor self-expression in the art class nor technology nor vocational guidance can *alone* solve the problems of education.² Nor can it too often be reiterated that there is no use in increasing the comfort and beauty and complications of our existence if we cannot use them to real advantage.

This is really the crux of the matter. It is the *capacity* to benefit from all the amenities of our so-called civilization that appears so strangely lacking. World-wide reception, long-playing records, television, jet-travel, cheap editions—all the facilities for the more abundant living they are designed to secure—do not seem to make for more joyous (which is not to be confused with hectic) living. They do not even stay the rise in crime or juvenile delinquency. It is only when man becomes aware of his spiritual capacities and employs them that he can hope to benefit from scientific and technological advance.

Only then can health in the total sense increase. We may fight the germ with amazing success, check infection ever more dramatically with anti-biotics, but the neuroses and psychoses that appear inversely to multiply can be prevented and cured only when the spiritual nature of man is taken into account. It is the *spirit* that giveth life.

For man's essential quest, whether he realizes it or not, is for deeper, more rewarding joys than any to be found on the purely physical or even mental plane. 'In the quest of every pleasure, even in the pursuit of the unlawful, man pursues his ceaseless quest of the infinite'³—though so often he does not know it.

Despite all the advances of our age, the current outlook remains strangely parochial. As Paul Brunton expresses it: 'Modern man has become that curious creature that feeds at the breasts of divinity yet knows it not. This spinning globe could not turn on its axis were it not for the propulsive energy of a higher power at its core but to the educated mind this is nothing more than a subject for geological investigation.'⁴

Not until this limited outlook is deepened and widened, not until man regains awareness of the spiritual nature of the universe and establishes conscious relationship with the Divinity that enfolds it, can individual or social problems be happily resolved. 'We cannot remove the chronic rheumatism of unhappiness, conflicts and frustration so long as that poisonous philosophy of life, pleasure on the sense plane remains our objective,'⁵ as Swami Akhilananda has written. And that modern mystic, Thomas Merton, wisely counsels: 'Do not look for rest in any pleasure because you were created for joy and if you do not know the difference between pleasure and joy you have not yet begun to live.'⁶

II

Where Psychology Falters

Can we look to the New Psychology to provide that essential clue to life's meaning that so persistently eludes us? During the past seventy years or so, such

enlightening revolutionary ideas about the make-up of the mind have emerged that it is not surprising that many of us tend to make the latest psychiatric manual our current bible, feeling that in truer understanding of human nature may be found the solution both of our individual and our social problems.

Certainly we cannot presume to under-rate the importance of a psychology the whole trend of which altered when Freud, formulating his theory of the unconscious mind, clarified and put into precise terms much knowledge which before had been vague and formless. The effects have been too extraordinarily far-reaching.

Educational theory has been revolutionized by the New Psychology, enabling parents and teachers to work with the grain of the child instead of against it, often with astonishingly constructive results. That they are not *always* constructive, that Anne becomes difficult because her parents read into Freud's teachings what Freud himself never intended, that John gets above himself because the true purport of Adler's teachings as to the inferiority complex is not understood, does not detract from the validity of the teachings themselves.

Nor can we cease to wonder at the curative aspects of the New Psychology. We can but marvel at those cases of blindness, for instance, where vision has been restored miraculously, as it seems, when the patient was led to discover just what he did not want to see and why he did not want to see it; at those cases of

paralysis cured when the patient is helped to understand the reason underlying his unwillingness to walk. Many a shell-shocked soldier might have remained a cripple all his life had he not been led with infinite skill and patience to understand the cause of his disability, the conflict between readiness to obey orders on the one hand and the urge to self-preservation by flight on the other. Sexual perversions have been straightened out by helping the victims to realize how guilt and fear of sex, implanted in early childhood, have twisted their attitude from normal. Accident-prone people, whose dangerous susceptibility in extreme cases may have endangered their very lives, have been helped to resolve the underlying impulse to self-punishment. The relief of claustrophobia, of certain forms of asthma, of the labour pains of birth are only further instances, among hundreds, of psychological treatment that appears, very often, almost magically successful.

The fact that psychological treatment is being successfully used increasingly to alleviate diseases previously considered to be of physical origin is further proof, if such were needed, of the importance of the new knowledge. Heart diseases of a certain type, high blood pressure, arthritis, fibrositis and other forms of rheumatism, diabetes, gastric and duodenal ulcers, migraine, tuberculosis, even cancer, among others, increasingly reveal, by their response to psycho-therapy, their psychological components.

All this, however, must not blind us to the fact that Psychology has its essential limits—a fact the pioneers

in this field would be the last to deny. Valuable as it is in aiding insight, in developing greater understanding not only of ourselves but others, impressive as are the advances made in the alleviation of human ills, the scope of psychology remains circumscribed. Many have undoubtedly learned through Freudian analysis to sublimate and more wisely to direct their energies; many learn through treatment based on Adlerian principles to use instead of being used by the inferiority complex that spoils life for so many. Yet helpful though psychological treatment often is in liberating the individual and thus renewing his zest for life, it does not solve all problems. There are many who continue to feel, even after deep analysis or protracted psycho-therapy, even when there is nothing in their immediate circumstances to account for it, a vague indefinable sense of something amiss. 'It is as though the cement of the building is lacking' was one man's description of his sense of personal inadequacy. Surely this would appear an indication of *spiritual* rather than purely psychological need?

Jung cites in his *Modern Man in Search of His Soul* the striking case of a young man with considerable psychological knowledge who analysed with scientific exactitude the neurosis from which he was suffering. He did not benefit from this as he confidently expected and came to Jung, demanding the reason.

In reading the account of his life, Jung noticed frequent references to winters spent in St. Moritz or Nice and upon enquiring who paid for these trips discovered that a poor school teacher who was in

love with the patient was depriving herself almost of the necessities of life in order to do so. This is the sort of injury to another, Jung points out, that lies too heavily on the conscience. The patient's neurosis, he concludes, was *spiritual* in origin—an unpopular, unfashionable diagnosis but surely the only one that fits the facts.

The states of conflict that cause so much misery, the emotional blocks that so often make for indecisiveness and vacillation, rendering joyous living impossible, are not by any means always ethically based. Those who suspect and crush back their instinctive impulses instead of using them constructively run as great a risk of unhappiness and emotional ill-health as those who give these impulses full rein in the mistaken idea that this will keep them free of complexes and neuroses.

We must beware, however, of accepting psychology as a total philosophy of living. Apart from the fact that the teachings of the great pioneers of the New Psychology are frequently misunderstood and misinterpreted to an extent that must have appalled them, there is no justification whatever for looking to psychology to provide ethical sanctions. Genuinely understood, it helps us to understand how we and other human beings tick and may help us to tick more effectively but it cannot take us all the way. Some neuroses that defy all the skill of the psychiatrist respond to treatment by the genuine spiritual healer (the strategic word here, of course, being 'genuine', for impostors abound) who may possess not a tenth of the psychiatrist's academic knowledge but who

recognizes the travail of soul that lies beyond the travail of mind and works on an entirely different plane.

Adjustment, that hard-worked concept of today, is essential for social living but in the sense usually implied it is not enough. As Dr. Erich Fromm points out: 'The adjusted person is too often merely one who has made himself into a commodity with nothing stable or definite except his need and his readiness to change rules. So long as he succeeds in his efforts, he enjoys a certain amount of security but the betrayal of the higher self, of human values, leaves an inner emptiness and security which become manifest when anything goes wrong with his battle for success. . . . The person who has attained inner strength or integrity may not be so successful as his unscrupulous neighbour but he will have security, judgment and objectivity which will make him less vulnerable to changing fortunes and the opinions of others and enhance his ability for constructive work.'¹

The inadequacy of the limited ideal of social adjustment as a total philosophy of life, the inevitable results of ignoring basic spiritual needs, is skilfully portrayed in that famous modern play, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The breakdown of the pathetic deluded man who bases his whole scheme of living on the necessity for 'getting by', who can give no more constructive advice to his sons than to see that they are 'well liked', is sympathetically and realistically portrayed. The widow's broken-hearted cry that 'the house is paid for but now

there's nobody home' is deeply symbolic of a struggle only for what could, in the end, give no real security.

More and more we see around us today, again to use Fromm's words, the influence of a psychology 'lacking its main subject matter, the soul . . . concerned with . . . reactions . . . instincts but not with specifically human phenomena: love, conscience, reason, values'. His conclusion that 'mental sickness cannot be understood apart from moral problems . . . the patient is sick because he has neglected his soul's demands', is obviously valid. But should we not substitute the word '*spiritual*' for the word '*moral*'? Something wider, deeper and more basic is needed than moral rectitude alone. This was expressed some years ago by Dr. Crichton Miller of the Tavistock Clinic, London, when he pointed out that every individual needs to make adjustment not only to himself, and to the mate, and to society, but to *infinity*.

It is necessary that we realize that the unconscious mind is not only, as it is so often represented to be, the repository into which the conscious mind sinks all the inconvenient crude desires it cannot face. The unconscious receives and transmits *all* experiences, spiritual as well as physical and mental, expressing these again, as occasion arises, in a way determined by the general viewpoint of the owner. Where this is narrow and restricted, the unconscious can indeed be a ruthless tyrannical master, but when the normal primitive desires are reconciled on the deepest level

with the spiritual insight that alone can irradiate them, the unconscious will prove our greatest ally.

There is a widespread current tendency today to imagine that we are not really responsible for what we do, being victims of compulsions we can do little about because they originate on the unconscious level. It is only too true that compulsions do flourish amongst us so that at any given moment we may indeed be 'driven' to a certain course of action—it should not be forgotten, however, that they could not exert such a decisive, precipitating effect if they had not previously been allowed to gain a hold owing to neglect of *spiritual* health.

Modern psychology clearly represents an important link in the chain of significant modern knowledge so amazingly being forged before our eyes today. To ignore the implications of its teachings is wilfully to delude ourselves. Yet these can, and if they are to yield their full usefulness must, be reconciled with realization of the essentially spiritual nature of man. His home may be only a speck in a universe the vastness of which becomes ever more apparent; he may share a common heritage with the plants and animals; yet he is a denizen of two worlds—the eternal as well as the temporal—and his nature partakes of both. The words of William Law, saint, mystic, and profound psychologist of the eighteenth century, remain as true today as when they were penned: 'There is a root or depth in thee whence all . . . faculties come forth as lines from a centre or branches from the body of a tree. This depth is called

the centre, or fund, or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity, I had almost said the infinity of the soul; for it is so infinite that nothing can give it rest but the infinity of God.’²

III

Bar of Reason

Like pleasure and the over-popularized, frequently misinterpreted New Psychology, the importance of the tangible seems to have usurped more than its rightful share of importance in the outlook of today. The result is a certain cheap scepticism as to what cannot be seen or felt or heard or ‘proved’. Thus the founder of the school of Behaviourism denies the existence of the soul on the grounds that ‘no one has ever touched a soul or put it in a test-tube’.

Obviously scepticism of a healthy kind is not to be despised. The gullible fall victim only too easily to all sorts of strange ideas that may be attractive and even reassuring but which are clearly unsound. Yet to maintain that only seeing is believing or that only that which is susceptible to scientific proof can be true is equally invalid.

Over-credulous are we, indeed, when we insist that the senses are *complete* guides to reality. Certainly they enable us to obtain indispensable data about the world we live in. Yet, as certainly, they can mislead us. As Paul Brunton emphasises,¹ they are

but *partial* guides. When, for instance, does a round table *look* round? Only when viewed from a point directly above or below the centre!

Apart from perspective and parallax, which experience rather than direct vision causes us to take into account, it must be remembered, as Brunton further points out, that our vision is limited in that our eyes function as cameras—not, for instance, as telescopes or microscopes through which we would, of course, obtain quite a different picture of the world.

Our eyes, also, only perceive a certain portion of the spectrum. There is much, we know today, that lies beyond our range of vision.

There is a point, too, beyond which our senses cease to function. We cannot perceive thought, for instance. Yet we can hardly dispute that thought exists—because we think.

The most thorough-going materialist cannot deny that our senses give us at best, not only incomplete, most limited information concerning the material properties of things but, still more, concerning the imponderables, which, nebulous though they may seem, really exert an enormous practical influence. It was the denial of these by the Nazi philosophy that not only shocked the civilized world but plunged it into wholesale misery.

To limit our awareness, therefore, by accepting *only* visual or tangible or even logical evidence is to see as through a glass darkly; to regard the material world as the only or even as the most important one

is gravely to limit our comprehension of life. Such a view is comparable to assessing the worth of a book by the quality of its binding, printing or paper rather than by the ideas expressed through these necessary media of expression; comparable to assessing the worth of a picture by the quality of the canvas rather than by the inspiration manifested through this. The enduring aspect of life lies in the spiritual, the real and indestructible element which uses but is not confined by the temporal vehicle.

It is interesting—and surely educative?—to note that the scepticism that currently so often characterizes the layman is not shared by contemporary scientists of the first rank.

Einstein tells us 'Science without religion is lame'; he writes also: 'The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the source of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant being which our dull faculties can only comprehend in their most primitive form—this knowledge is at the centre of all true science. The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest main-spring of all, the basis of all scientific research. All religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deep emotional conviction

of a superior reasoning power as revealed in the incomprehensible universe forms my idea of God.'

The popular emphasis on the necessity for 'scientific proof' before belief of any kind can be established is in fact inconsistent with the whole temper of science today. Modern physics, glimpsing ever-widening horizons, becomes ever more hesitant as to the philosophic implications of its giant researches. Eddington expressed the modern attitude when he said in one of his lectures: 'We find that where science has progressed the furthest, mind has but acquired from nature what Mind has put into nature. . . . Here is a hint of aspects deep in the world of physics yet unattainable by the methods of physics.'

The essential part that science plays is explained by Professor Radhakrishnan when he writes: 'Wisdom pure and transcendent is different from scientific knowledge but is not discontinuous from it. Scientific knowledge prepares for the highest wisdom. The partial truths of science are different from the whole truths of spirit. Scientific knowledge is useful since it dispels the darkness oppressing the mind, shows up the incompleteness of our world and prepares the mind for something beyond it.'²

Science, like psychology, makes no claim to final interpretations. Both play their part in developing human understanding but 'truth', as Berdjaef has said, 'is something to be grasped integrally by the whole personality'.³ It is possible to apprehend intuitively what cannot be comprehended intellectually,

not only possible but necessary if we are to find meaning in life.

There is such a thing—and this is the real answer to those who protest against taking anything ‘on faith’—as *immediate* experience. There is *immediate* knowledge that has no basis of proof in the usual sense yet which cannot be questioned. We ‘know’ what water is by drinking it far more convincingly and intimately than by acquainting ourselves, however thoroughly, with its physical and chemical properties.⁴

Similarly immediate spiritual experience is personally convincing in a way that theoretic argument can never be. As Karl Jaspers explains: ‘All the proofs of the existence of God are fundamentally no proof at all but methods of achieving certainty through thought. All the proofs of the existence of God and their variants that have been devised through the centuries differ essentially from scientific proofs. They are attempts to express man’s assent to God in terms of thought. There are ways of thought by which we come to limits at which *the consciousness of God suddenly becomes a natural presence*. . . . The individual stands in an immediate independent relationship to God that requires no intermediary. . . . What matters is not our knowledge of God. . . . The whole emphasis is on love in the world, of the reading of that which is illumined by reason.’⁵

Spiritual insight is not contrary to but *beyond* reason. Intellectual understanding may usefully supplement it but cannot go all the way. In the very dawn of history, the ancient sages, without benefit of modern

knowledge, not only anticipated the present significant scientific trends but were conscious, as few are conscious today, of the unity of life. They recognized 'The One in All Things', as they termed it, which alone can make life meaningful. They had *immediate* experience of the Ultimate Reality lying behind, beyond and interpenetrating all things which Science today increasingly indicates. They recognized the

Innermost element
Everywhere, always,
Being of beings,
Changeless, eternal
For ever and ever.⁶

It is by such immediate experience, various techniques for achieving which will later be discussed, that we ourselves can develop the spiritual insight that illumines life, making it colourful and significant.

IV

Basic Solution

The conclusion that the quest of meaning is essentially a spiritual quest is unwelcome to many of us. Spiritual living has too long been linked with forms and ceremonies, rituals and doctrines that not only seem meaningless but offend us intellectually.

Though these could never have developed had they not originally held meaning and though even today—despite the hard things said about the church—they still hold meaning for some, the fact remains that they no longer do so for most of us.

Yet with anguish widespread and with fear and the hatred to which fear always gives rise stalking the world, 'the transiency of the transient and the finiteness of the finite' is more and more clearly brought home to us. It becomes increasingly apparent that we must have something beyond our human selves and other equally fallible human selves in which to believe.

Indications of this fundamental need are to be seen in the tendency to succumb to the hysteria of race worship or to the more blatant forms of communism, to pin faith to those strange pseudo-sciences that currently flourish or to embrace one of those new cults so numerous today, one of those 'new religions' that seem principally concerned with the achievement of health and prosperity.

Yet none of these can nourish us spiritually. None can substitute for religion in the basic sense.

What is religion? The derivation of the word—from the Latin *religare*, to bind—provides an important clue. Religion is, essentially, the binding of man to God.

Man in his *spiritual* aspect. 'True humanism tells us that there is something more in man than is apparent to his ordinary consciousness, something that frames ideals and thoughts, a finer spiritual presence which

makes him dissatisfied with mere earthly pursuits. The one doctrine that has the longest intellectual ancestry is that the ordinary condition of man is not his ultimate being, that he has a deeper soul, call it breath or ghost, soul or spirit. In each dwells a light which no power can extinguish, an immortal spirit, benign and tolerant, the silent witness in his heart. The greatest thinkers in the world unite in asking us to know the Self.¹

This 'Self' can only become known to man through union with its origin—the God within; the God that pervades man and all things.

This is clearly the view that Jesus took. Preaching not in stately edifices, using no theological phrases, speaking in the simplest words to the thousands who gathered to hear him on the shores of Galilee, Jesus counselled them to find the Kingdom of Heaven within them. His aim was to reveal to man and to lead him consciously to contact the inherent divinity within him. Similarly Buddha exhorted his hearers to be lamps unto themselves; led them to seek Nirvana—which is not 'nothingness' in the sense it is so often interpreted to be but a state of wholeness which comes of true consciousness of the Self, the inner light, as the Quakers term it.

This is the consciousness man so sorely needs today—a consciousness based on the conviction of the spiritual reality behind all appearances and the constant endeavour to live in rapport with it. Only this can invest living with meaning and colour, with vital beauty and vital truth, with vital goodness

—goodness in the wider sense of *soundness* which embraces but is by no means merely a matter of morals.

For, as Kenneth Walker writes: 'Whilst religion is linked with ethics, it does not spring from them. Religion is the apprehension of the divine and holy and in so far as any man loves and pursues what he recognizes as such, he may be deemed a religious man. Institutions, rituals, disciplines and churches are but the means men use to help them in their pursuit of the divine. But the end of religion is beyond all passing forms. Stripped of all its doctrines, it is an emotional experience, the non-intellectual apprehension of another world.'²

This is the apprehension the wisest men of old cultivated. It can be cultivated equally today. For it is based, as St. Augustine right back in the third century described it in his *Confessions*, on 'a wisdom that was not made but is at present as it hath ever been and ever shall be'.

This philosophy to be discussed involves neither dogmatic narrowness nor a vague and impracticable other worldliness nor a soporific faith justified neither by reason or common sense. 'Any experience that does not fit in with tested knowledge is to be rejected as hocus-pocus. To be spiritual is not to reject knowledge but to go beyond it.'³ Understanding of the few but versatile principles of this philosophy develops a truer sense of proportion than that which usually obtains today and provides a rational foundation for intelligent belief. It enables us to live purposefully,

fearlessly and therefore joyously in the face of all temporal hazards. We need these basic principles, not as a fire insurance against future torment, not even as a guarantee of future bliss, but to enable us to realize that life is significant and worthwhile *here and now* no matter what may befall our frail and temporary humanity.

The current query, 'What the hell?' provokes no answer to our problem. The headaches—or heart-aches?—of this aspirin age are not to be cured by its pet medicament. Not by recourse to new cults or to *isms* of any kind shall we gain the inner peace all, consciously or unconsciously, long for. We can only build up a satisfying individual and therefore communal life on the basis of the enduring truths blazoned through the ages by the Perennial Philosophy.

The Perennial Philosophy

The spiritual teachings that lie at the roots of the great world-religions have been handed down from time immemorial. 'When we peer into the records of Man's religion as it was before any of the higher religions made their epiphany, we find the light of these truths and counsels already shining there.'¹ They have been hidden by materialism, derided by pseudo-intellectualism, ignored, denied, cluttered with superstition and with dogma, yet they spring to new life ever and again. At times such as the present, when we need these counsels more, perhaps, than ever before, they may appear almost completely obscured. Yet they never have been and never can be entirely lost. Their unerring wisdom still exerts its influence even though often unknown to us. Without this, civilization—even in the attenuated form in which we know it today—could not have survived.

The Perennial Philosophy, as Leibnitz so aptly termed it, is man's spiritual heritage. The principles it enshrines are 'co-eval with Mankind in the sense of being intimations of a spiritual presence accompanying us on our pilgrimage . . . an accompaniment without which Humanity would not be human. In this presence, Man is confronted by something

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, men may have walked with God, living in complete harmony with nature and in conscious alignment with the Higher Powers, listening to God as Moses is said to have listened when the Lord spoke to him 'as a man speaketh to his friend'.

However this may be, traces of the Perennial Philosophy are found in the Vedas of the Hindus, the oldest sacred literature known to the world, considered by some scholars to date from 1000 B.C., though handed down by hand of mouth long before that. The later authors of the Upanisads presented the Vedic conceptions more clearly, with more emphasis upon the one God, Brahman, and in the Bhagavad-Gita (or Song of God), a later interpolation by an anonymous writer or writers, the basic principles are outlined more concisely in narrative form.

This extraordinarily beautiful little book, considered by Professor Radhakrishnan, the greatest authority on the subject, to be dated about the 4th century B.C., is beloved of many in the West as in the East. It presents much of the world's highest wisdom in the clearest, simplest way, being comparable in many respects with the New Testament.

The Vedas and the Upanisads, like the Bible, are collections of writings of varying date and varying levels of enlightenment. As the New Testament epitomizes those deeper, enduring, perennial truths for which man was struggling and sometimes grasps in the Old, so the Gita, gospel of the Hindus of to-day, epitomizes the teachings of the earlier Eastern

scriptures, revealing the Perennial Wisdom in clearer, purer form.

This Timeless Truth, though outlined in both New Testament and Gita, has been particularly associated with the East. It has received more recognition from Eastern than Western writers because the West has busied itself mainly with recording impressions while the more leisurely East has concentrated rather upon interpreting them. Yet boundaries of space and time cannot affect its *universal* significance. Concerned with Universal Reality and man's relation to it, it forms the root of Christianity (itself eastern in origin) as of Hinduism and the Buddhism so closely associated with it from the fifth century onwards. It underlies Judaism as it underlies Taoism. The forms differ, the essential truths remain.

It is important to realize this. Though appreciation of the Eastern wisdom has markedly grown of recent years, it is still often considered to be in many ways alien to Western thinking: we tend still rather to borrow from it than to realize it as entirely compatible with the most enlightened level of thought at present attained.

The biggest stumbling-block is, perhaps, the Eastern doctrine of *Maya*. The Westerner often imagines that Eastern philosophy represents the material world as an illusion, a view to which those of the West, so keenly interested in technology and its applications, obviously find it impossible to subscribe.

When the term *Maya* is really understood, however, the difficulty disappears. Professor

Radhakrishnan's explanation in his preface to his own translation of the Bhagavad-Gita makes this clear. 'The term *Maya*,' he states, 'does not imply that the world is an illusion or non-existent absolutely. . . . As the manifested world hides the real from the vision of mortals, it is said to be delusive in character. The world is not an illusion though by regarding it as a mere mechanical determination of nature unrelated to God, we fail to perceive its divine essence. It then becomes a source of delusion.' How often this happens is surely only too clearly indicated by history and in the current materialistic trend with its disastrous results.

The doctrine of *Karma*, similarly closely associated with the East, also presents difficulties to the Western mind only because it is not understood. It does not naively imply, as is so often thought, that a man makes his own destiny in the material sense. It conveys the same *spiritual* truth that underlies the familiar teaching that as a man sows so also shall he reap. 'The giving of the correct answers,' as Aldous Huxley reminds us, 'is rewarded primarily by spiritual growth and progressive realization of latent potentialities. . . . Karma exists but its equivalent of act and reward is not always obvious and material. The bad man in prosperity may, all unknown to himself, be darkened and corroded with inward rust, while the good man under affliction may be in rewarding process of growth.'²

What about the theory of Reincarnation? This is a belief held, in theory at least, by the greater portion of

mankind today. It has also been accepted by many great minds. Pythagoras, for instance, declared: 'After death, the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle and passes into the region of the dead where it remains till it is sent back to this world to inhabit some other body. . . . After undergoing successive purifications, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the gods and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded.' There is some evidence that this theory was accepted by Jesus and taught by his early followers, though formally repudiated by the Church Council during the third century after his death. Yet while it forms a credible hypothesis, it remains *only* a hypothesis—it is not a fundamental principle of the Perennial Philosophy. This maintains basically that identity endures, the present being merely one link in a chain of which we, in our present state of evolution, can see neither beginning nor end.

Basically, this philosophy embraces four principles which can arouse no prejudice in any thoughtful, unbiased mind.

First: The world we perceive around us by means of our senses and everything and every creature within it originate from and depend for existence upon the Divine Ground.

Second: Human beings are capable not only of inferring the existence of the Divine Ground but of immediate experience of it.

Third: Man possesses a double nature—a personal

ego and an Eternal Self which is the inner man, the Divine Spark within the soul.

Fourth: The one end and purpose of man's life is to identify himself with this Eternal Self, thus attaining immediate knowledge of the Divine.³

'The fundamental truths', Professor Radhakrishnan has written, 'are that our real self is the supreme being which it is our duty to discover and consciously to become and this being is one in all. The soul that has found itself is no longer conscious of itself in its isolation. It is conscious of the universal life. . . . A single impulse runs beneath all the adventures and aspirations of man. . . . This secret solidarity of the human race we cannot escape from. It cannot be abolished by the passing insanities of the world.'⁴

This is the all-embracing philosophy needed by the disillusioned, cerebral individual of today, by those who have seen through and thought through everything—as we so often imagine we have. It indicates reasonable answers to questions man has asked since first he became capable of abstract thought. It assuages his deepest cravings in giving that reassurance as to the ultimate significance of life for which he hungers. In an age when the trend of physics makes a defiant atheism as out of place as Calvinism is out of date, when agnosticism is completely useless as a defence against the anxieties of our times, the Perennial Philosophy, as I hope now to show, offers counsels consistent with present knowledge.

Ancient Thought and Modern Science

One can protest, of course, that the Perennial Philosophy deals with subjects that nobody really understands. Who can fully realize, for example, what is really implied by the term 'Divine Ground'? How can we hope to fathom its meaning?

In all its boundlessness, of course we cannot. Yet the existence of any word implies some kind of mental concept behind it and the *idea* of the Divine Ground—God, Deity, Brahma, Allah, the Tao, the Higher Intelligence, the Great Spirit, the Oversoul, the Overself—to use only a few of the terms man has devised in his attempt to name the unnamable, to define the indefinable—has existed in man's mind from the earliest times of which we have any record. Even when a diversity of Gods was worshipped, the separate entities really represented only facets of a much larger total concept and today, even among the most primitive peoples of the world, we find belief in one God.

The anthropologist, Dr. Martin Guisinde,¹ returning from several months' sojourn among the Bushmen living in Angola and south of the Okavanga River, reports that these primitive people, living at the cultural level of the Wood and Bone Age which

preceded the Stone Age, believe in Guau, 'creator of the universe and almighty ruler of every man', who sends the soul at birth and takes it back at death to his dwelling-place where all Bushmen foregather. He emphasizes that such beliefs are entirely their own, the possibility of communication by missionaries or travellers being excluded.

The idea of God has evolved through the ages from such simple definite forms to much more complex and intangible ones. 'God is a symbol of all that which is in man and yet which man is not, a symbol of a spiritual reality which we can strive to realize in ourselves and yet can never describe or define. God is like the horizon which sets the limit to our sight. To the native mind it seems to be something which can be grasped, yet to reach the horizon is to seek a mirage. When we move, the horizon moves. When we climb even a low hill, the horizon becomes wider but still it remains a limitation and never a thing to be taken hold of.'²

As the authors of the Upanisads realized, conviction springs from direct awareness. 'The Eternal Being can never be proved,' they pointed out, 'it is to be perceived in one way only.' They meant, as the context makes obvious, by immediate experience—the kind of experience which Jalal-Uddin-Rumi, thirteenth-century poet and mystic, indicates when he writes: 'When a mother cries to her sucking babe, "Come, Oh Son, I am thy mother," does the child reply, "Oh, mother, show proof that I shall find comfort in taking thy milk"?'³

'The reality of the Supreme,' as Professor Radhakrishnan emphasizes, 'is not a question to be solved by dialectic—only spiritual experience can provide us with proofs of the existence of spirit.'⁴ Science, adopting the method of impersonal enquiry, does not concern itself with the concept of Absolute Reality. 'It does not seek to know Brahman,' Christopher Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda observe. 'It says in effect, "For the present, at any rate, we have no technique for investigating this type of experience. When you speak of knowing Brahman, you are speaking in extra scientific terms".'⁵

Yet it is surely significant that the physicists of today postulate a *living* universe. The Victorian scientists' idea of a material universe at the mercy of various mechanistic forces has given place to a universe in which life and motion are teeming in all things, even the most apparently inanimate. As Isherwood and Prabhavananda further remark: 'If the scientist cannot yet detect life in a stone, he believes that this is only because he lacks a suitable method for doing so.' The older scientist represented the world of matter as entirely separate and distinct from the world of spirit with which he had nothing to do. Today the position is so completely reversed that Arthur Koetsler goes so far as to say, in his preface to *Insight and Outlook*,⁶ that 'No honest scientist can now publish a book on physics without a metaphysical epilogue'.

This point of view is clearly expressed by Jeans. 'Thirty years ago,' he has told us, 'we thought

or assumed that we were heading towards an ultimate reality of a mechanical kind. It seemed to consist of a hopeless jumble of atoms which were destined to perform meaningless dances for a time under the action of blind purposeless forces and then fell back to form a dead world. Into this wholly mechanical world, through the play of the same blind forces, life had stumbled by accident. . . . Today, there is a wide measurement of agreement which, on the physical side amounts almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is leading to a non-mechanical reality. The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter.’⁶

That the life-force runs through all things is particularly clearly indicated by the investigations carried on during the last quarter of a century by the Indian botanist, Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, of the University of Calcutta.⁷ ‘In the pursuit of my investigations,’ he said at the opening of the Bose Institute, ‘I was unconsciously led into the boundary region of physics and physiology. To my amazement I found boundary lines vanishing and points of contact emerging between the realms of the living and the non-living. Inorganic matter was perceived as anything but inert, it was a—thrill under the action of multitudinous forces.

‘A universal reaction seemed to bring metal, plant

and animal under a common law. They all exhibited essentially the same phenomena of fatigue and depression with possibilities of recovery and exaltation, as well as the permanent irresponsiveness associated with death.'

Bose's experiments were carried out mainly by means of his Cresograph—it was for the invention of this instrument, which magnifies ten million times the delicate response to stimuli manifested by metals, plants and animals, that he was knighted in 1917. The graph on the recording drum attached to the instrument traces the vibrations which result as the subject—metal or plant—is stimulated in various ways. Thus a fern to which the Cresograph was attached was shown by the graph on the recording drum to be growing at an infinitesimal rate only made visible by the enormous magnification given by the instrument. When the growing tip was touched by a metal rod, growth was seen abruptly to cease; when the rod was withdrawn, growth was seen gradually to resume. When fatigued by repeated shocks, a slowing down of the activity curve was recorded. When the fern was chloroformed, growth discontinued till an antidote was applied, when it resumed. The thrust of a sharp instrument resulted in spasmodic flutters similar to those recorded on the drum when a painful stimulus was applied to animal muscle fibres. When a razor cut the stem, there was an abrupt cessation of further records on the drum. Death had ensued—that is to say, the organism *as such* was dead. Its unity was broken

up and it therefore ceased to function *as a whole*, although the ultimate particles remained as fully alive and active as in all so-called 'inanimate' forms.

Tin and other metals were found to react in similar fashion, the records traced in the graph in response to the stimuli just described closely resembling one another.

Bose also perfected an instrument known as the Resonant Cardiograph by which infinitesimal pulsations in plant, animal and human beings, occurring during one-hundredth part of a second, can be recorded. These, again, showed marked resemblance.

The researches of Dr. K. S. Cole and Dr. H. J. Curtis of Columbia University, a report on which was published in 1938 in the *New York Times*, supported Bose's findings in demonstrating the virtual identity of the long single cells of the fresh-water plants, *Intella*, with those of single animal nerve cells. They also found that *Intella* fibres, on being stimulated, propagated electrical waves similar in every way, except velocity, to those discharged on stimulus by the nerve fibres in animal or in man.

Does not all this come remarkably close to the idea of the Divine Ground found thousands of years ago in the Vedas? We read in these of that which lies 'under the seen, of all creatures the seed that is changeless', of 'cosmos revealed and its germ that lies hidden', of 'Brahman in all things'. Matter in all its form is now recognized to be essentially condensed energy, the nature of which is still unknown but which is

indestructible. It is 'exhaustless, self-sustained', as Sir Edwin Arnold describes it in *The Song Celestial*;⁸ it is

Unborn, undying
Never ceasing
Never beginning
Deathless, birthless
Unchanging for ever

as the Bhagavad-Gita records.

Until recently a definite line was drawn between organic and inorganic substances. It was assumed that cells, animal or vegetable, could only originate from cells. Now experiments made in Russia by Professor Olga Borisovna Lapeshinkaya have demonstrated the derivation of cellular from non-cellular matter which, in its turn, appears to be derived from inanimate matter.

The discovery of the Coelacanth in the Mozambique Channel is also highly significant in that it raises the question as to whether creation is not perhaps occurring continuously in the seas and on the earth's surface. The accepted evolutionary theory, as Dr. Janse⁹ of the Johannesburg museum points out, is that the creation of living things from inorganic substances has happened only once and possibly only at one place but, even supposing the Coelacanth represents merely a side-shoot, unless the theory of continuous creation is accepted, how can the sudden emergence of a queer fish which by all the rules should

have died out 200,000,000 years ago, be satisfactorily explained? . . . It might be reasonable to suppose that the Coelacanth had not spent this vast time unchanged but had only just started out on the long journey of evolution. . . . The new view of continuous creation explains why primitive forms of life still exist when according to the old theory they should long ago have evolved to higher forms.'

Does this not suggest an ever-present creator rather than an absentee one who has retired from a universe created aeons ago to leave the world to its own devices?

Dr. Robert Broome indicates similar conclusions in more general terms when he writes in *The Religion of a Scientist*: 'My own researches in the past fifty years . . . have convinced me not only that all modern forms of life have arisen by Evolution but that this Evolution has not been haphazard but guided by some spiritual Planner or Planners.'

Modern science has awed us with its astronomic concepts. The world is revealed as not only unimaginably old, at least 600 million years old, but, compared with the universe, incredibly small. Sir Harold Spence-Jones, the present Astronomer Royal, for instance, expresses his view, backed by exhaustive research, that there are about 100,000,000 separate universes each containing 100,000,000 stars, adding that the surveys made as yet have by no means reached the bounds of the cosmos. Sir Robert Kotze, quoting this in his *Unity of Life*, further illustrates the smallness of our world from the cosmic

point of view by picturing our entire solar system as a single grain in the middle of a desert stretching five hundred miles in every direction, the earth a mere speck on this grain.

It is scarcely surprising that we of today feel that we can scarcely be of importance in such a scheme. Certainly the vastness opening out before us, as Lin Yutang¹⁰ reasonably observes, 'makes a complicated system of downfall and punishment seem as absurd and preposterous as though we were evolving it for a being less than the size of an ant or even a fair-sized maggot'. The grandeur and majesty of creation hardly tallies with the God of Wrath, on the alert to pay us out for every misdemeanour, which the guilty child in man has devised.

Yet the staggering truth that the Power pervading the universe expresses itself intimately as well as cosmically, becomes increasingly evident as scientific research advances. This power as effortlessly surrounds and pervades the individual as the universe, the flower as the star. 'Lift the stone and you will find me. Cleave the wood and I am there.'¹¹

There is nothing contrary either to reason or to modern knowledge and much that corresponds to the experience of many, in deducing that this omnipresent power may find in man a more potentially conscious vehicle than in any other created thing known to us.

The Real Nature of Human Beings

The intelligence which dimly manifests itself in the instinctive reaching of the tendril for support, in the instinctive discrimination in the choice of food shown by the insectivorous plants, or even lower down the scale by the sea anemone which very definitely accepts or rejects food particles swept into its 'mouth' by the tides—this intelligence, necessarily manifesting itself only to the degree made possible by the capacity of the instrument, surely reveals itself uniquely in man. For in a universe in which 'the one life dwells and sings in all created things',¹ man alone appears capable of *awareness* of this life. In him the life that dreams in the plants and stirs in the animals begins to awaken to fuller consciousness. It is true that he does not always develop this consciousness. Often he continues to imagine himself merely the self-motivating, independent entity, the self-contained isolated small personality, that superficially he appears to be. Yet thousands of years ago, the truth about his real nature was known.

We find it recorded in story form in one of the earlier Upanisads: 'There once lived Svetaketu Arunaya, the grandson of Aruna. To him his father, Uddelaka, the son of Aruna said: "Svetaketu, go to

school, for there is none belonging to our race, darling, who not having studied the Vedas is, as it were, a Brahamana by birth only."

'Having begun his apprenticeship with a teacher when he was twelve years of age, Svetaketu returned to his father when he was twenty-four, having studied all the Vedas, conceited, considering himself well-read and stern.

'His father said to him: "Svetaketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?"

"What is that instruction, sir?" he asked.'

Explaining that one 'subtile essence' is found in all things and that in that essence all that exists has its Self, the father states:

"It is the Self and thou, O Svetaketu, art it."

"Please, sir, inform me still more," said the son.

"Be it so, my child," the father replied.

"If someone were to strike at the root of this large tree, it would bleed but live. If he were to strike at its stem, it would bleed but live. If he were to strike at its top, it would bleed but live. Pervaded by the living Self, that tree stands firm, drinking in its nourishment and rejoicing, but if the life (the living Self) leaves one of its branches, that branch withers; if it leaves a second, that branch withers; if it leaves a third, that branch withers—if it leaves the whole tree, the whole tree withers.

“In exactly the same manner, my son, know this. The body indeed withers and dies when the living Self has left it; the living Self dies not.

“That which is that subtile essence, in it all that exists has its Self. It is the true, it is the Self and thou, O Svetaketu, art it.”²

This theme that man is essentially of the Universal Eternal Self runs through all the great religions, since all are based on the Perennial Philosophy, yet the implications are seldom realized. ‘Surely those venerable men, my teachers, do not know that,’ commented Svetaketu. ‘For if they had known it why should they not have told me?’ This, the basic fact of man’s existence, the fact that really makes it meaningful, the only fact that can make it eternally meaningful, has been of all facts the most generally ignored.

Yet we have tangible evidence of this ‘subtile essence’ of the Self even on the physical plane—as, for instance, in the perpetual re-creation of our bodies as manifested not only in the normal growth of hair and nails but in the spontaneous healing of cuts and scratches. We have personal experience, also, of the spirit that creates, animates and recreates in the feeling of renewed vigour which follows depletion. We may be exhausted after a spate of work yet suddenly, even if there is no opportunity for prolonged rest, if there is the chance merely to pause, we feel new energy flooding into us. We can invoke it too, by methods known through the ages, later to be described.

There is a word for this life-force, this elusive intangible reality, in Gothic, in Ancient Greek, in

Latin and all the languages derived from them, yet the significance of this is too often denied today. As Jung points out, 'the living spirit is eternally renewed and pursues its goal in manifest inconceivable ways throughout the history of mankind. Measured against it, the name and forms which men have given it mean little enough; they are only the changing leaves and blossoms of the stem of the eternal tree.

'Yet we have now discovered that it was intellectually unjustified presumption on our forefathers' part to assume that man has a soul, that this soul . . . is of divine nature and therefore immortal; that there is a power inherent in it which builds up the body, supports its life, heals its ills and enables the soul to live independently of the body, that there are incorporeal spirits with which the soul associates and that beyond our empirical present there is a spiritual world from which the soul receives knowledge of spiritual things whose organs cannot be discovered in this visible world. . . . But,' he concludes, 'it is just as presumptuous and fantastic for us to presume that matter produces spirit—that the brain cells manufacture thought and that all this could not possibly be other than it is.'³

Is it, indeed, reasonable thus to reduce our conception of man to the dead level, purely material one? How can we imagine, when we come really to consider the matter, that the brain (which, marvellous instrument of co-ordination though it is, reveals itself when life has departed as no more than a slab of grey and white matter) possesses *intrinsically* the power to *create* thought? Because the body is so much with us,

it is understandable that we should tend to identify it, particularly that portion of it that *transmits* thought, with our essential Self. Yet there are many indications that the current of intelligence which animates us is by no means so irrevocably physically moored as we often assume.

What about the dream state, when our minds obviously continue to function—while the body sleeps—at times (as in nightmares) absurdly and illogically, at times (as in those prophetic dreams which occasionally occur) with clarity and inspiration?

What about the state of hypnosis, when the mind of the subject is shown, by his circumstantial accounts of happenings at a distance, to have migrated independently of the physical self? Frauds, based on the will to believe or on exploitation for purpose of gain, are notoriously frequent in this and allied fields but there still remain many carefully checked and authenticated cases, recorded in the files of Physical Research Societies of standing, where the hypnotized subject has reported trivial happenings, such as could not possibly have been anticipated, which have taken place in far distant places at the time of the interview, thus confirming first hand observation. A competent resumé of such evidence is given by Hornell Hart in his paper on 'Psychical Research', included in the collection, *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, recently published by the Beacon Press.

What about the state of death-like trance attained by adepts in the East? Many doctors of standing have examined the body under such conditions and found

no sign of life in it, all vitality, the breathing and the heart-beat being suspended until the adept 'returns to life' again, often at a time previously set by him. In his *Quest of the Overself*, Paul Brunton substantiates, by dated reports from reputable newspapers, his account of Yogis who have been buried alive for prolonged periods, to resume ordinary existence when disinterred at the appointed time. I have myself met one capable of doing this.

Does not all this imply the existence of something that can both observe and operate apart from the physical body?

And what about the fact of extra-sensory perception? Since 1930, Professor Rhine and his colleagues of Duke University have indicated in the course of ninety-thousand to a hundred-thousand experiments, that telepathy (the power to perceive the thoughts and feelings of others) and clairvoyance (the power to perceive mentally without the aid of the physical eye) can be demonstrated under laboratory conditions—and this no less successfully at distances of hundreds of miles than from the same or adjoining room. Surely this implies that the focus of consciousness of certain individuals can operate not only at a distance from, but independently of, the physical sense-organs? The facts as given in Rhine's *Extra-Sensory Perceptions after Sixty Years* and *New Frontiers of the Mind* are impressive and convincing.

Nor can we overlook the indications of 'the one Mind common to all individual men', of the Oversoul, as Emerson terms it, which are implicit in the new

practice of Paradiagnosis. A few doctors today are employing people apparently endowed with especially sympathetic and receptive minds to aid the diagnosis of disease in children too young to be capable of locating their pains or describing their symptoms. The medium stands near the child and indicates the site of the pain where he feels it, transferred, in his own body, thus providing the doctor with the essential information he requires. Although Para-diagnosis is still in its infancy it has proved valuable often enough to add to the increasing volume of evidence, not only that extra-sensory means of feeling and knowing actually exist, but also sympathetic communication between mind and mind. Such powers, like those previously cited, are manifested as yet only by a small number of human beings but that they are manifested at all seems to indicate that they are potential, even if at present for the most part latent, in man.

Cases are known to all of us, too, where the spirit triumphs despite the existence of extreme pain and actual physical incapacity. Consider the late President Roosevelt, stricken in youth with poliomyelitis yet indomitably continuing his work. Another striking instance is that of Murrough Nesbit of South Africa who, legless himself, established the Avalon rehabilitation centre for similarly disabled men. More recently, the exploits of the legless pilot, Douglas Bader, have astonished the world.⁴ All these and many others demonstrate in practice that, despite physical injury or disease, the essential spirit operates unharmed.

Recent trends in medicine reflect this point of view. The modern doctor increasingly tends to consider the spirit even more than the body (and an increasing number are beginning to realize the implications) in directing attention to the resolutions of the patient's doubts and fears and to the building up of his confidence to meet life as much as to the physical symptoms of his illness—a method Plato advised two thousand years ago.

And if our bodies are 'but instruments through which our real selves experience the drama of life',⁵ this seems no less true of our emotions. The sense of *identity* does not really adhere to these any more than it adheres to the body. Behind the fears that come and go, behind anger and lust, happiness and sorrow, persists the silent unchangeable *I*. Behind the emotional role of the individual—and this changes as he acts at one time as husband, at another as father, at still another as son, as he works or plays—the *I* of the human being, 'the brilliant white light of the spiritual consciousness' persists, standing in relation to the body or mind as the electric current to the lamp, depending upon it temporarily for manifestation but not basically adherent to or inseparable from it.

Those cogent words from the story of Svetaketu, 'That art thou', Professor Rahdakrishnan explains, 'mean that "God is myself" even as my soul is the self of my body. God is the supporting controlling principle of the soul as the soul is the supporting principle of the body.'⁶

That man is not God—as the specious teachings of

certain forms of what is too loosely termed 'New Thought' have sometimes represented—is made quite clear. 'God and the soul are one, not because the two are identical but because God indwells and penetrates the soul. He is the inner guide who dwells deep in the soul and as such is the principle of its life.' Nor does this imply any loss of identity, as Eastern thought has so often been erroneously interpreted to imply. 'Immanence is not identity. In time as well as in Eternity, the creature remains distinct from the Creator.'⁶ The ideal of union with God could not imply an extinction which would make it meaningless.

The Atman or Divine Spark, the Eternal Self in man, is the 'light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'⁷ of which mystics through the ages have been conscious. Thus Ruysbroeck, Dutch mystic of the fourteenth century, affirms: 'The image of God is found essentially and personally in all mankind. Each possesses it whole and entirely and individually and all together not more than one alone. In this way we are all one, intimately united in our eternal image which is the image of God and the Source in us of all our life.'⁸

Is there, then, no difference between man and man? We know there is. 'One candle lighted from another—is the light of the second the same light as the first? . . . The light is the same, yet different, the same in essence yet seeming, maybe, to the outward eye, to shine more brightly than before. Perhaps the wax which formed the second was more purified, the wick of finer texture, and the whole created from a finer

mould—to that extent the second differs from the first, yet the light of life was one and the same, more brightly shining in the second case because of the purer *skandhas* (components) of its form.⁹

The difference lies both in individuality and personality—terms often considered synonymous but in fact entirely different in meaning. The derivations of the two words are enlightening. The word ‘individual’ comes from the Latin, *individuus*, meaning ‘indivisible’. The word ‘personality’ which is derived from the Latin, *persona*, indicates, in its original meaning, ‘an assumed character’.

Personality, determining the role we play during this stage of our evolution, is transient whereas individuality, the essence of ourselves, endures. The ebbing and flowing personality, which Marc Edmond Jones called ‘the mynness in me’, is merely an aggregate of physical and mental characteristics. It is the *I*, the Eternal Self, not the *me*, that is the persistent integral part of the human being.

The *I*, the individuality can shine through the personality, irradiating it. Then we get the vital, constructive, responsive individual, bubbling over with life and energy and interests. Too often, however, the *I* is obscured, even though it can never be extinguished, by the transient personality that fails to recognize and transmit it. Then we get the bore or the flattened-out subdued individual who does not realize his potentialities or the one with whom contact is difficult to establish with the cold eye or the basilisk stare.

To develop basic integrity, every human being has to learn how to use the personality in the service, rather than the disservice of the Eternal Self in which, alone, enduring identity abides. He has to reconcile that enduring part of him with the role he is temporarily playing. As the vehicle through which the individuality expresses itself, the personality needs and merits intelligent cultivation but it must remain subordinate.

This view of man's real nature is not the popular one, yet it has persisted through the ages and is sometimes expressed even today. It is somewhat unexpectedly formulated, for instance, in a modern novel.¹⁰

'A man (the Judge was saying) might be thought of as a wheel—the centre of a revolving wheel was a point, it had position but no magnitude; the true centre of a revolving wheel did not revolve, the wheel revolved about it. If I took away part of the rim, of some of the spokes or even the hub, wouldn't you still say the thing was a wheel? . . . *They* can all go hang; the wheel may be broken, but it can continue to exist without any one of them. But nothing is more inconceivable than a wheel without a centre. The centre is the thing without which the wheel is not. So your innermost being is not your character, which may be likened to a wheel's spokes, or your actions which are its rim, or even your observable personality which may be thought as a wheel's hub; it is that upon which they all depend; it is that without which you are not. It is the being that tells you of the single origin of all beings, of the single law governing all laws, of the single value from which all values spring. There never

was a time, waking or sleeping, in which the idea "I am" is not alive in you, unaffected by time, deeper than thought, deeper than feeling, the very spring of instinct and intuition, the original, unsilenceable whisper of the soul.'

Divine Discontent: its Meaning and Potentialities

All things are informed by the Divine Ground. Yet while plants and animals, unless corrupted by human interference, live unperplexed on their own plane, unconsciously in accord with it, the reactions of man are necessarily more complicated. Modern psychology is veering more and more to this view. 'Self-assurance, reason and imagination,' Erich Fromm points out, 'have disrupted the harmony that characterizes animal existence. . . . This emergence has made man into an anomaly. . . . He is part of nature, subject to physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends the rest of nature. Being aware of himself, he realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence. . . . He must give account to himself of himself and the meaning of his existence. He is driven to overcome his inner split, tormented by a craving for 'absoluteness', for another kind of harmony. Man is not able to choose between having and not having ideals but he is free to choose between different kinds of ideals, between being devoted to the worship of power and destruction or being devoted to reason and love.'¹

Man, in other words, is subject to conflict between the personality which forms his limited ego and the

individuality or I or essence which forms his Eternal Self. He becomes *conscious*, as no animal can be conscious, of these two aspects of his nature, even if he fails to *interpret* them for what they are.

Professor Radhakrishnan explains the position more basically from the broader, spiritual point of view. 'The uniqueness of man among all the products of nature lies in this, that in him nature seeks to exceed itself consciously, no longer by an automatic or unconscious activity, but by a mental and spiritual effort. Man is not a plant or animal but a thinking and spiritual being set to shape his nature for higher purposes. He seeks to establish order and harmony among the different parts of his nature and strives after an integrated life. He is unhappy so long as he does not succeed in his attempt at reaching an organic wholeness of life. There is always a mental and moral ferment in him, a tension between what he is and what he wishes to become, between the matter which offers the possibility of existence and the spirit which moulds it into significant being.'²

It is interesting to see that Ouspensky, belonging to a very different school, also emphasizes the existence of the 'inner split' essentially characteristic of man, the split from which all his difficulties and problems originate. He describes it thus:

'Essence is what is born in man.

'Personality is what is acquired.

'Essence is what is his own. Personality is what is *not* his own. Essence cannot be lost, cannot be changed or injured. Personality can be changed almost

vague as it is inarticulate. More evolved, man becomes increasingly acutely conscious of the price he pays for being man, a creature not only self-conscious in the ordinary sense but hovering on the borders of and capable of developing true consciousness of the Self.

The artist and poet hint at this. Shelley, for instance, writes:

We look before and after
And pine for what is not.
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught.

Keats likewise indicates the state in which personality obscures rather than reveals the Eternal Self when he writes of

‘the ache for beauty which we shadow as we see’.

Rabindranath Tagore reveals more clearly the nature of the inner tension.

Ah, but where is it? Who can strain the blue from
the sky?
I try to grasp the beauty
It eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands.
Baffled and weary I come back.
How can the body touch the flower that only the
spirit may touch?

Men are tortured by the longing implied here until they are enabled to accept the essential limitations of

the material through realization of the greater reality lying beyond it. 'In all created things,' as Thomas Merton has pointed out, 'there is something that reflects the fulfilment of heaven and something that reflects the anguish of hell. The fulfilment belongs to the reality of created being. The anguish belongs to the disorder of our desire which looks for a greater reality in the object of our desire than it actually possesses and a greater fulfilment than it is capable of giving.'⁴ As Paul Brunton expresses it: 'Our souls press against their prison bars of flesh and cause unutterable yearnings and indefinable longings.'⁵ Felix Guyot in *Yoga for the West* similarly points out that 'We feel exiled during our earth life and even during our happiest hours feel homesick for a lost country.'⁶

Professor Radhakrishnan analyses more fully this nostalgic frame of mind, familiar to so many of us. 'The image of God operating in us,' he writes, 'produces a sense of insufficiency. Man has a haunting sense of the vanity, the transience, the precariousness of all human happiness. . . . This intolerable sadness is generally the experience of all who aspire to the vision of Reality.'⁷

When this stage is reached, we are beginning to wake to fuller realization. Nevertheless, we tend to cling to those familiar satisfactions we have known even when they satisfy no longer. 'By their insane refusal to recognize facts as they are, men and women condemn themselves to have their desires stultified and their lives distorted or extinguished. For they are under no necessity to remain exclusively on

the human level of existence—it is in their power to pass from the level of the absence of God to that of God's presence . . . let God be sufficiently often present in the absence of human desires and feelings and preoccupations; the result will be a transformation of the life which must be lived in the intervals on the human level. Chaos gives place to order—not the arbitrary, purely human order that comes from the subordination of the swarm to some lunatic ideal but an order that reflects the real order of the world. Bondage gives place to liberty. Violence and mere inertia give place to peace. . . .'⁸

To remain fettered by the confines, subject to the tyranny of the personal self is to remain vulnerable to suffering of all kinds, to be exposed to fear of loss and deprivation and injury, to false feelings of isolation. 'When the soul is a stranger the whole universe appears unfriendly' as Kabir, fourteenth-century poet and mystic, points out. Then it is that we wander looking for consolation in the way St. Augustine describes in his *Confessions*, 'I, Lord, went wandering like a strayed sheep, seeking thee with anxious reasoning without when all the time Thou wast within me. . . . I went round the streets and squares and cities of the world seeking thee and found Thee not because I sought without for Him who was within.'

Sometimes liberation may come in a flash of inspiration. More often insight is achieved only by trying out one avenue of satisfaction after another and finding each inadequate. Such experience is described in Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*.

First there is the reluctance to respond to the insistent inner urge:

I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind: and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears
From those strong feet that followed, followed
after.

The disinclination to meet the demands of spiritual living for fear of the sacrifices that may be involved is described:

I pleaded, outlaw-wise . . .
(For though I knew His love who followed
Yet was I sure adread
Lest having him, I must have naught beside.)

The dissatisfaction that follows the discovery of the inadequacy of all other quests, the divine discontent that these cannot satisfy, is clearly portrayed:

I laughed in the morning's eyes,
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal rime;
Against the red throb of its sunset heart
I laid my own to beat;

But not by that, by that, was eased my human
smart . . .

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth . . .

Yet finally, wandering is done and the surrender
that brings peace is made:

Halts by me that footfall:

Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of his hand, outstretched caressingly?

'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,

I am He Whom thou seekest!

Thou drawest love from thee, who drawest Me.'

'Man attains his liberation by piercing the veil of Maya and rediscovering his total identity with Brahman. Knowing himself to be one with the Universal Spirit, he realizes ineffable Peace. Only then does he get beyond the fiction of birth and death; only then does he become immortal. And this is the ultimate goal of all religions—to dehypnotize the soul hypnotized by its own ignorance.'⁹

This is the meaning underlying the famous teaching of Jesus. A man must indeed lose his life to find it. As the personality is progressively subordinated, the Eternal Self comes into its own and the potentialities of divine discontent are realized.

Birth of Awareness

'He who enters into awareness of the real is the complete man whose mind is serene and whose whole being is at rest,' wrote the authors of the Upanisads centuries ago. 'Knowing the bliss of Brahman he does not fear anything. . . . What sorrow? what delusion is there for him who possesses this unity?'

Mystics through the ages have told us that the experience of Reality—such as that which came to Moses in the Burning Bush and blinded Paul on the road to Damascus—is wonderful beyond imagining. Of different periods, of different races, highly educated or unlettered, with definite religious convictions or none, they bear evidence that is astonishingly unanimous. They are necessarily hampered in expressing transcendent experience in the language of everyday use yet all testify to the experience of losing themselves from the boundaries of the personal and entering into the bliss of the Eternal Self.

Thus Jacob Behmen, sixteenth-century cobbler mystic, exclaimed: 'The greatness of the triumphing that was in the spirit, I cannot explain either in speech or writing, neither can it be compared to anything but that wherein life is generated in the midst of death and it is like the resurrection from the dead.'¹

Thoreau of the nineteenth century indicates a similar sense of liberation:

I hearing get who have no ears
And sight who had but eyes before,
I moments live who lived but years
And truth discerned who knows but learning's
lore.
I hear beyond the range of sound,
I see beyond the range of sight.
New earth and seas and skies abound
And in my day, the sun hath paled his light.²

Tennyson describes the trances into which he entered at times from very early childhood: 'All at once as it were, out of the intenseness of consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away in boundless being and this is not a confused state but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality the only true life.' And again: 'I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual to be the only real and true. Depend upon it, the spiritual *is* the real; it belongs to one more than the hand and foot. . . . You may tell me that my hand or my foot are only imaginary symbols of my existence, I could believe you but never, never, can you convince me that the I is not the eternal reality and that the spiritual is not the true and real part of me.'³

When the soul of man is illuminated, freed from the

preoccupations that distort the view, the promise 'Behold I make all things new' is actually realized in practice. The face of the world is subtly changed. Thus Jonathan Edwards writes of his own experience: 'The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm sweet cast or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellence, his wisdom, his purity and love seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds and the sky; in the grass, flowers and trees; in the water and all nature. . . .'⁴

Dante speaks of the 'splendour of the living light eternal' which appeared to him in the guise of Beatrice. 'The glory of Him who moves everything penetrates through the universe and shines in one place more and another less. In the heaven that receives most of its light I have been and have seen things which he who descends from there above neither knows how nor is able to recount. On a sudden, day seemed to be added to day as if he who is able had adorned the heavens with another sun.'⁵

Buddha who taught mainly concerning the conduct of life here and now, who concentrated on the noble eight-fold path to spiritual living, yet occasionally reveals the ecstasy derived from contemplation. 'To reach . . . and remain in those stages of deliverance which are incorporeal and pass beyond phenomena, cause (a man) to become an inheritor of the highest heavens, make him being one become multiple, being multiple to become one; will endow him with clear and heavenly ear, surpassing that of men; enable him

to comprehend by his own heart the hearts of other beings . . . to see with pure and heavenly vision surpassing that of men.’⁶

Thomas Traherne, the young seventeenth-century mystic, exclaims: ‘Your enjoyment of the world is never right till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father’s palace and look upon the skies, the earth and the air as celestial joys; having such a reverend esteem for all as if you were among the angels. The bride of a monarch in her husband’s chamber hath no such causes of delight as you.

‘You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world and more so because all men in this world are the sole heirs as well as you.’⁷

This new awareness of a living universe, in which even apparently inanimate objects pulsate with the common life one shares, may come as a flash of inspiration never to be forgotten, or it may establish itself as a more or less habitual frame of mind. In *A Year of Grace*, for instance, Victor Gollancz describes ‘the mood that has dominantly been mine ever since, as a very small boy, I sniffed the air and sang for joy amid the late autumn leaves in a narrow London garden. Now, when I am fifty-seven, “the dust and stones of the street” are still, by God’s grace, “as precious as gold” to me; the corn is still “orient and immortal wheat” and “what my heart first awakening whispered

the world was" that and none other, my heart whispers still.'⁸

Nor does such vision concern itself only with the sublime. It is not by any means only every blade of grass that is 'alive with God'. 'There is the dearest freshness deep in things'⁹—in *all* things, even the most prosaic. Evelyn Underhill describes in one of her letters, 'walking down the Notting Hill main road and observing the (extremely sordid) landscape with joy and astonishment. Even the movement of the traffic had something unusual and sublime in it.'¹⁰

And the vision may come to the most unlikely, as Somerset Maugham rather surprisingly indicates in *The Razor's Edge*, when he describes the initiation of his character Larry. Describing the man who introduced him to the new conception, Larry says: 'It was phantastic to hear that great hulking brute, who'd been thrown out of his own world, that sardonic, bitter, down-and-out speaking of the ultimate reality of things and the blessedness of the union with God. It was new to me and I was confused and excited. I was like someone who had lain awake in a darkened room and suddenly a chink of light shoots through the curtains and he knows that he only has to draw them and there the countryside will be spread before him in the glory of the dawn.'¹¹

A somewhat similar experience which must surely have been his own is described by another modern novelist, François Mauriac, in *The Nest of Vipers*. In the words of the principal character of this novel—a miserly, aged man, forsaken by those who but for his

own warped character might have loved him, conscious of a misspent life: 'I was conscious only of a deep sense of peace. Stripped of everything, isolated and with a terrible death hanging over my head, I remained calm, watchful and mentally alert. The thought of my melancholy existence did not depress me nor did I feel the burden of my empty years. . . . It was as though I were not an old sick man but had a life time ahead of me, as though the peace of which I was possessed was Somebody.'¹²

The first-hand evidence of Walt Whitman, who lived in a state of constant mystical perception, is recorded again and again in *Leaves of Grass*.

To take only a few examples: 'Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all art and argument on earth. And I know that the hand of God is the elder hand on my own and I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother of my own and that the Kelson of creation is love.'

And again:

Hast never come to thee an hour '
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all
these bubbles, fashion, wealth?
These eager business aims—books, politics, art,
armours
To utter nothingness?

What this meant to him is revealed in these words, written years later:

Thou, O God, my life has lighted
 With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of
 thee
 Light rare, untellable, lighting the very light.
 Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages.
 For that, O God, be it my latest word; here on
 my knees
 Old, poor and paralysed, I thank Thee. . . .
 I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves
 buffet me
 Thee, thee, at last I know.
 O joy untellable!¹³

Edward Carpenter, a little later in the nineteenth century, writes: 'I am the sun that shines upon all creatures from within—gaze thou upon me and thou shalt be filled with joy eternal. Be not deceived. Soon the outer world shall drop off—thou shalt slough it away as a man sloughs his mortal body. Learn, even now, to spread thy wings in that other world—to swim in the ocean, my child, of Me and My Love.'¹⁴

Wordsworth's familiar words from lines written at 'Tintern Abbey' reflect the same experience:

' . . . I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thought, a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air
 And the blue sky and in the mind of man
 A motion and a spirit that impels
 All thinking things, all objects and all thought
 And rolls through all things.

These lines are characteristically mystical in that while there is deep consciousness of the Power pervading the universe no attempt is made to describe it. The fundamental Reality lies beyond the province of intellect, cannot be defined since definition implies comparison. As the mystics stress, It can be apprehended but It cannot be comprehended. They cannot, do not, attempt to picture It. 'The austerity of silence, is the only way in which we can bring out the inadequacy of our halting descriptions and imperfect standards. . . . The Upanisads indulge in negative accounts, that the Real is not this, not that (*na iti, na iti*) without sinews, without scar, untouched by evil, without shadow or darkness, without a within or without.' The Bhagavad-Gita supports this comment of Professor Radhakrishnan¹⁵ in many passages. The Supreme is said to be 'unmanifest, unthinkable and unchanging', 'neither existent nor non-existent . . . it does not move and yet it moves, it is far away and yet it is near. . . .'

It is hardly surprising that the essentially empirical experience of illumination is as difficult to describe, as Ruskin pointed out, as would be the sensation of hunger to one who had never felt it. Yet this is scarcely a reason for denying it. 'You see many stars in the sky at night, but find them not when the sun rises,' says Sri Ramakrishna. 'Can you say there are no stars?'¹⁶

William James' analogy of the dog and his master is useful in indicating how the degree of our awareness rather than the environment as perceived by our sense

organs determines the sort of world we really live in. A dog has killed a chicken. The neighbour calls to lay a complaint. Restitution is made. The dog is present at the transaction, hears the conversation, witnesses the exchange of money but, though he sees all that goes on, he is quite in the dark as to its meaning. He lives in the same surroundings as his master and the complainant yet inhabits actually an entirely different world. In the same way, the man bound by space-time conceptions inhabits an entirely different world from the mystic who realizes that '*now*', as Mohammed cried, 'is the day of eternity'.

For eternity is not, as it is commonly conceived to be, merely an extension of time, not an endless phase of existence in the hereafter during which, as some vaguely suppose, compensation for present vicissitudes will be found while others, unable to entertain comfortably the concept of interminable passivity, dismiss it wholly. It is as Richard Jeffries indicates an *immediate* experience. 'I cannot understand time,' he says. 'It is eternity now. It is about me in the sunshine. I am in it as the butterfly floats in the light-laden air. Nothing has to come. It is *now*. Now is eternity, now is immortal life. . . . Haste not, be at rest, *this* is eternity.'¹⁷

This is the state of being in which men, even during this present phase, can participate. This is the Tao of Lao-Tze, the Tao which is not only the way but the origin of all things, inexhaustible, intangible, the immortal universal essence, the treasure of the aware. 'In this world's playground, there is no fear for him

who has once touched the feet of God,' says Ramakrishna. 'He attains freedom from all worldly cares and anxieties and none can ever touch him again.'

To escape from the personal ego is to attain the peace that passeth understanding, to inhabit the Kingdom of Heaven of which Christ taught. It is to attain the Nirvana which Buddha promised those who become lamps unto themselves, accepting the direction of the light of the Eternal Self within them. For Heaven lies not only in the hereafter nor does Nirvana, as is too often thought, imply extinction. Nor does the achievement of the unitive knowledge of God, the absorption in God which the Perennial Wisdom teaches to be man's final end and purpose, indicate loss of identity or oblivion. 'That beatific condition in which the dewdrop slips into the shining sea is not,' as Leadbeater points out, 'an experience based on any time-space concept. Those who have passed through that most marvellous of all experiences know that, paradoxical as it may seem, the sensation is exactly the reverse and that a far closer description would be that the ocean has somehow been poured into the drop. The consciousness wide as the sea is a great and glorious fact and when a man attains it, it seems that his consciousness takes in *all*, not that he has been merged into something else.'

This loss of personality is clearly nothing to be feared. To escape from it surely rather implies that one may become real in a greater sense, aware in the *infinite* sense, a state more wonderful than anything the finite mind can envisage.

Realization through Yoga

Yet it is not alone through flashes of awareness any more than through merely intellectual realization of man's real nature, that unitive knowledge is achieved. A vision, a moment of illumination, may be bestowed and leave permanent effect, bringing a sense of completeness which for ever vanquishes the personal craving to be, establishing joyous conviction of wider life, of the friendliness of the universe and the Power that motivates and sustains it. On the other hand, even when vision is vouchsafed, the clear memory of it may fade, though it can never be forgotten, to leave no very lasting effect.

There are many instances of visions vouchsafed, of grace being bestowed; but more often it must be invited.

Some through the ages have realized this and have striven continually to attain direct experience of God and the understanding and liberation it brings. 'Yoga, which has for its phases, knowledge and meditation, love and service, is the ancient road that leads from darkness to light, from death to immortality.'¹

Professor Radhakrishnan's definition should effectually dispel any false ideas of Yoga that may be entertained, correct the common misconceptions that

have grown up around it during the course of the centuries. Yoga is not, obviously, just a matter of sitting cross-legged. Nor is it something you must go to the Himalayas to practice. It has nothing to do with magic even though it has sometimes been exploited and certain psychic powers incidentally developed during its practice demonstrated for gain. Yoga is not a cult suitable only for holy men who sit back to watch the world go by, having recourse in time of need to the begging-bowl. Nor is it only for the crank and the neurotic—though these too may benefit from its practice, becoming better-balanced, more efficient, more constructive, realistic human beings. For, far from encouraging an inept other-worldliness, Yoga promotes capable grappling with present problems in the light of the larger vision it is designed both to seek and to achieve.

Yoga (pronounced, incidentally, with the *a* silent) is so vast a subject, one to which men have devoted lifetimes of study and effort, that we can but attempt to touch the fringes of it. Yet even the most elementary understanding and practice brings its own reward.

The word is derived from the Sanskrit root—*jug*, meaning to yoke or unite—and it implies both the practice and result of yoking or uniting man with God, of the attempt to merge both through contemplation and through the directed activity that results into the vast consciousness beyond finite thought.

The Gita tells us that Yoga will dispel all unhappiness. Swami Vivekananda explains why. 'When . . . man comes face to face with something which is never

destroyed, something which is by its own nature eternally pure and perfect, he will no more be miserable, no more unhappy. All misery comes from fear, unsatisfied desire. Man will find that he never dies and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there will be perfect bliss, even in this body.' For it is through Yoga (in its meditative aspect) that man can develop awareness of the Divinity within him. 'The powers of the mind,' Vivekananda further explains, 'should be turned back upon itself to perceive its own innermost secrets. *Then* we will perceive for ourselves whether we have souls, whether life is for five minutes or for eternity, whether there is a God in the universe.'²

Only actual experience can convince. There are obviously many causes of distress—hardship of one kind or another, separation from those we love, bereavement . . . much else. Yet, once the mind perceives for itself the real nature of existence, even these lose some of their sting, cannot entirely destroy though for a time they may cloud, the inner bliss of being that, once we achieve it, makes life even during this temporal phase worth living.

Yoga being a spiritual practice with a spiritual objective is not one to be entered into lightly. Before embarking upon it, it is essential to realize that spiritual attainment is of far greater value than any worldly 'success'. False values warp both approach and realization. 'As the soiled mirror never reflects the

rays of the sun, so the impure and unclean of heart is subject to *maya*, never perceives the glory of *Bhagava*.³

The integrity that assesses all things at their real value, the conviction that the unitive knowledge of God is above all things to be sought and prized, implies no foolish neglect of practical considerations but does develop new perspective. The less real can no longer be mistaken for the real, nor the part for the whole. The less real can no longer be rendered the homage and devotion due to the real. One must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, but not allow oneself to be deceived as to which are which.

When, and when only, a man determines what is really of value, when in the words of the Gita, he

... casts from him
Vanity, violence
Pride, lust and anger,

all qualities which manifest themselves as a result of over-valuation of the things pertaining to the personal ego and the temporal world; not until he is consequently spiritually free of and hence unfettered by his possessions,

totally free
From the sense of ego
And tranquil in heart

is he eager to seek 'oneness with Brahma'. When and only when

all that he does
Is offered before Me
In utter surrender,
My grace is upon him
He finds the eternal
The place unchanging.

For 'the nature of the one Reality is such that it cannot be directly or immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit.'⁴

Yoga is of almost incredibly ancient origin. Not only is it mentioned in the earlier Upanisads but archaeologists have unearthed in the Indus Valley the figure of Siva, the great Yogi, the date of which is conservatively estimated to be around 3250 B.C. The Siva figure is represented in trance, in one of the postures in which the Buddha has been represented.

No particular posture, however, is essential for meditation nor is meditation the only form of Yoga. An elementary but comprehensive summary of this and others is given by Swami Pavitrananda. 'The dominant factors in our lives,' he explains, 'are feeling, thought and action, the mind being the motivating force behind all. Because there is the feeling factor, we shun misery and run after pleasure. If we could control our feelings and emotions and give them the right direction, we should seek real happiness instead of sense pleasure and thus attain the Joy that passes all understanding.

'The method of discrimination by which we realize

our identity with the Ultimate Existence is called Jnana Yoga or the science of Wisdom. The art of detachment by which we can govern all our activities so that we may not become entangled in the meshes of work, though we are engaged in it, is called Karma Yoga. . . . Finally the method by which we can control the mind itself, which is the source of all our misery, is called Raja Yoga. . . .'⁵

Though these practices have always been closely associated with Hinduism and Buddhism and have been practised much more widely in the East than in the West, Yoga is in itself independent of any traditional form of religion, representing the mystical element and the practical application to be found in all. This mystic element has always had its place in Christianity, notably in Catholicism and among the Quakers, as among the Sufis of Islam.

That contemplation and activity are both essential for achieving unitive knowledge is a point stressed by teachers both of East and West. It is often thought that Eastern religions are mainly meditative, whereas the Christianity that spread from the East through the West is mainly active in character. It is true that in the East the meditative aspect predominates, the Asiatic temperament being reflective in bias, whereas in the West where the accent is on 'progress', activity has always been considered of more importance. Yet spiritual teachers of each hemisphere advocate both. That the practice of their followers either in East or West has not reflected their high standards does not affect the truth they taught.

Thus in the Bhagavad-Gita we read of Arjuna asking: 'Tell me with certainty the one way in which I may reach bliss.' To which Krishna replies: 'In this world, there is a two-fold path, that of Yoga by knowledge . . . and that of Yoga by action. . . . Man winneth not freedom from action by abstaining from activity nor by mere renunciation does he rise to perfection. Nor can anyone even for an instant remain really actionless, for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature. Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform that action which is duty for, by performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme.'⁶

Conversely, just as the early Hindu teachers with whom the ideal of the contemplative life is most closely associated emphasized the necessity for work in the fully rounded life, so Jesus who very definitely emphasized the aspect of service not only practised but prescribed meditation. 'Woe unto ye, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!', he said, 'because ye shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men. For ye enter not into yourselves neither suffer those that are entering in to enter.' And speaking of Mary, who took the opportunity of sitting meditatively at his feet, unlike the active Martha who busied herself zealously with innumerable small household tasks, he said 'She hath chosen the better part.' He indicated the method of meditation, telling his followers to pray, not as the Pharisees, who incurred his condemnation because they prevented others from 'entering into themselves', but 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet

and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and thy Father which seest in secret shall reward thee openly.'

As Jesus spoke habitually in spiritual terms, it is reasonable to assume that the rewards attendant on this symbolic shutting of the door, excluding the affairs of the world, are spiritual ones. This is indeed found to be the case. Increased understanding will be found to result in more constructive thinking, more imperviousness to circumstance derived from increased power to act not from the narrow personal point of view but from that of the Eternal Self.

Because men have different needs, determined by temperament, and different capacities, their modes of expression and thus the choice of method varies. 'In the very nature of things,' Swami Pavitrananda further points out, 'the infinite is beyond the reach of our finite thought and spirit. . . . A pot or jar cannot contain all the waters of the sea but only as much as its capacity. Take a party of travellers consisting of a historian, an archaologist, a botanist, an artist and a child: when they reach their destination, each will see the place from his own point of view. The historian will search for the spot of historical importance; the archaologist will run after old buildings and ruins; the botanist will be interested in trees and plants; the geologist will be thinking of the age of the land; the artist will try to reproduce the colours and lines of the surroundings and perhaps the child will be looking in wonder at the cars and people on the road or at the attractive display of things in a shop window. In the

same way, our conception of God will vary according to the viewpoint and mental capacity of each one of us. . . . This does not matter so long as one's genuine spiritual craving is satisfied.'⁷

Professor Radhakrishnan explains the position thus: 'We can reach the goal of perfection, attain the saving truth in three different ways, by a knowledge of Reality (Jnana) or adoration and love (Bhakti) of the Supreme Person or by the subjection of the will to the Divine purpose (Karma).

'These are distinguished on account of the distribution of emphasis on the theoretical, emotional and practical aspects. Men are of different types, reflective, emotional or active but they are not exclusively so. At the end, knowledge, love and action mingle together. God Himself is . . . reality, truth and bliss. To those seeking knowledge He is Eternal Light, clear and radiant as the sun at noonday in which is no darkness; to those struggling for virtue, He is Eternal Righteousness, steadfast and impartial; and to those emotionally inclined, He is Eternal Love and Beauty of Holiness. Even as God combines in Himself these features, man aims at the integral life of the spirit. Cognition, will and feeling, though logically distinguishable, are not really separable in the concrete life and unity of mind. They are different aspects of the one movement of the soul.'⁸

Aldous Huxley expresses the same view when similarly considering 'the great highways conducting to that height above the actual and the particular, where we stand in the immediate presence of the

Infinite, who shines out as from the deeps of the soul'. 'An individual,' he says, 'can move almost indefinitely up or down, toward union with the Divine Ground of his own and all other beings or towards the last, the infernal extremes of separateness and self-love. But . . . it is impossible for one kind of physical constitution to transform itself into another kind; and the particular temperament associated with a given physical constitution can be modified only within narrow limits. . . . All that anyone can do is to make the best of his congenital psycho-physical make up, to change the fundamental pattern of constitution is beyond his power.'⁹

In working out the characteristic approach toward union with the Divine Ground, Huxley adopts the classification of human types recently made by Dr. William Sheldon and his collaborators.

Dr. Sheldon has established that each type of body-build has its associated temperament. In practice, of course, pure types are seldom or never encountered. Human beings are mixtures in varying proportions of all three. Yet the predominating element in the body-mind determines the predominating way of approach.

The endomorph tends to be viscerotonic in temperament, interested in and enjoying food, comfort and company, ardently desiring social approval. Since life tends to centre round his emotions, any effort he may make toward unitive knowledge is likely to be predominantly devotional.

The slender small-boned ectomorph or cerebrotone, concerned with what goes on within himself rather

than with the external world, delighting in solitude and privacy and the opportunity for introspection, will tend to base any approach he may make on thought.

The mesomorph or somatone, large-boned with strong muscles, delights in physical activity, is courageous and aggressive, desiring power which he usually works hard to achieve. He will obviously tend to choose primarily the way of action.

One way cannot be chosen entirely to the exclusion of others—devotion, thought and practice are each essential and the discipline of many-sided effort equally so. The cerebrotone's tendency to egoism, the viscerotone's love for creature comforts, the somatone's lust for power must each be controlled in the quest of Reality. Yet every human being, whatever his nature, can work out his own disciplined way to that unitive knowledge of God which is the way of liberation from the narrow limiting confines of the personal self.

To each his own path. As the anonymous authors of the Bhagavad-Gita pointed out centuries ago: 'If you cannot become absorbed in Me, then try to reach Me by repeated concentration. If you lack the strength to concentrate, then devote yourself to works which will please Me. For by working for My sake alone you will achieve perfection. If you cannot do even this then surrender yourself to Me altogether. . . .

Whatever path men travel
Is My path
No matter where they walk
It leads to Me.

*The Personal Conception of God and
Modern Thought*

Does the concept of the God of the Universe, of the God both transcendent and immanent, of a birthless, deathless ever-present Power pervading all things, necessarily exclude the concept of a personal God?

If it does, we of today may indeed despair. Modern man torn by war and by the suffering inevitably following in its wake, haunted by rumours of war, shocked by the whole tragedy of the times, needs a personal God.

The one concept does not exclude the other. Even in the earliest Hindu writings we find the distinction made between *Brahman*—the Absolute, beyond time and space, impossible for the mind of man to realize or even to conceive and *Brahma*—the God manifesting in the world.

Such a distinction is, after all, entirely reasonable. As Dean Inge has somewhere remarked, 'If we cannot truly say that God is a person, it is nevertheless compatible with logic to say there is personality in God.' Gerald Heard amplifies this when he writes, 'We need not pause to enquire in what sense God can rightly be conceived as personal: it is obvious that that which by definition is omnipresent cannot be called personal

with the limitations that this implies and equally cannot be called non-personal since persons are part of that manifestation.'

Modern science, too, rather supports than detracts from the idea of a personal God. Jeans, for instance, writes: 'The new knowledge impels us to renew our hasty first impression that we had stumbled into a universe that either did not concern itself with the life or was actively hostile to life. . . . We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing and controlling power that has something in common with our individual minds.'¹

There is no intellectual barrier to the belief that even in a world teeming with millions, a world which is in itself only a speck in the illimitable vastness of the universe, each one of us may yet be the object of the constant attentive, solicitude of the stupendous, indescribable power behind the universe.

Admittedly it is difficult for the finite mind even to begin to conceive how this could possibly be but an illustration given by Brunton, drawn as it is from faintly analogous human experience, may prove helpful. 'Just as, during a single act of attention in our finite way, when we enter a hall in the midst of a concert we can take in the hall itself, the crowds of listeners and the strains of music and yet attend to the business of walking down an aisle to our seat, so the World-Mind in its infinite way can take in the entire universe in a single act of its own attention, can make everything and everything in it the contents of its own consciousness.' From this illustration of the diverse

ways in which even the mind of men can function simultaneously, we may 'derive a mere hint of what the infinite World-Mind can conceivably accomplish in embracing a single all-comprehensive thought. Each phase in the whole universe is equally present to its perception. Its experience is all-pervading, being always in contact with all aspects at all times.

'The World-Mind's consciousness embraces the All, else it could not be what it is. It perceives the world without having to perceive it in bits and pieces as we humans do, that is, it perceives integrally, holding everything in a single vast vision. This means that the parts are seen in their true relation not only to each other but to the whole.'²

Aldous Huxley considers the way in which God works in the world from another angle. 'The physical situation willed by a Divine Providence may be arranged by the perpetually creating mind that sustains the universe . . . in which case Providence will appear to do its work by wholly natural means; or else, very exceptionally, the Divine Mind may act directly on the universe from the outside as it were—in which case the workings of Providence and the gifts of grace will appear miraculous.

'Similarly the Divine Mind may choose to communicate with finite minds either by manipulating the world of men and things in a way which the particular mind to be reached at the moment will find meaningful or else there may be direct communication by something resembling thought transference.'³

Surely the personal experience of many of us

enables us to recall instances when circumstances, even while following the general trend of living and observing the general law of cause and effect, yet appeared, within these limits, to arrange themselves in a meaningful pattern? Many are also able to recall significant inspiration flashing into the mind at a strategic moment. It is impossible to conceive of the sequence of cause and effect being capriciously set aside in favour of one or another. 'We suffer of ourselves,' and did we not reap as we sow life would indeed be disconcertingly haphazard. Yet individual application, within the general framework, often seems to be made to individual circumstances. Things 'work out' as we say.

And why not? 'Man may be only one of a myriad of organisms that have infested the crust of a minor planet of one of the smaller stars in one of a billion galaxies. . . . Yet may we not reasonably assume that an intelligent Creator would find his intelligent creatures of especial interest?'⁴

Nor have great teachers—the Avatars in whom the Divine Eternal Self is revealed as clearly and consistently as it is so often obscured in ourselves—been lacking to assure us that this is the case. The Gita tells us:

When goodness grows weak
 When evil increases
 I make myself a body
 In every age I come back
 To deliver the holy
 To destroy the sin of the sinner
 To establish righteousness.

Yoga of Devotion

'The Inner Self is always settled in the heart of man,' as Arjuna instructed his son, Svetaketu, who had learned so much without learning this one essential fact that makes living significant. 'Let a man draw that Self from his body with steadiness as one draws pith from a reed. Let him know that Self as the right, the immortal.'¹

This is an undertaking requiring courage, determination and concentration, as the Bhagavad-Gita implies:

So with his heart serene and fearless,
 Firm in his vow of renunciation,
 Holding his mind from its restless roaming,
 Now let him struggle to reach My oneness,
 Ever absorbed, his eyes on Me always,
 His Prize, his purpose.

The struggle is worthwhile. Meditation of the kind now to be considered is a method of acquiring knowledge of the essential nature of things, of establishing conscious contact and union with the integrating principle of the universe. It produces 'tranquillity of mind which in turn gives rise to the inward silence in which the soul begins to establish contact with the

Eternal from which it is sundered and experiences the presence of the indwelling God. In stillness, which is the rest of the soul from earthly encounter, insight is born and man becomes what he is.'² Meditation proves a discipline because it necessitates employing a part of the mind that most of us, increasingly confused by the increasingly complicated civilization of today, have almost ceased to use. The surface mind, agitating as to immediate ways and means, planning constantly how to overcome the immediate difficulties of everyday living, has to yield during moments of meditation to the super-conscious mind. For only when this takes control can we consciously contact the Reality which replenishes, inspires and motivates the whole being.

That this element really exists, enabling the achievement of the perspective view that alone empowers tranquil and constructive action, even amidst the fearsome threats and harassing conditions of modern civilization, can be proved only by actually developing it. 'Nothing in our everyday experience' as Aldous Huxley says, 'gives us much reason for supposing that the mind of the average sensual man has, for one of its constituents, something resembling or identical with the Reality substantial to the manifold world; and yet when that mind is subjected to certain rather drastic treatments, the divine element of which it is in part at least composed becomes manifest not only to the mind itself but also, by its reflection in external behaviour, to other minds. It is only by making psychological and moral experiments that we can discover the ultimate

nature and its possibilities. In the ordinary circumstances of average sensual life, these potentialities of the mind remain latent and unmanifested. If we would realize them, we must fulfil certain conditions which experience has shown empirically to be valid.’³

Meditation is one method of getting into touch with ‘the One in all Things’ which pervades the universe. Recharging the spiritual battery, we develop finer values than those that obtain on the material level.

No one can teach anyone else how to meditate, still less presume to foretell what may be individually discovered in so essentially intimate a process, but it is possible to outline the conditions conducive to the development of the receptive frame of mind necessary for meditation.

The necessity to develop *stillness*, the capacity quietly to wait, is stressed by mystics through the ages:

Be still and know that I am God (Psalm xlii, 10).

Wait upon the Lord, be of good courage and he shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, upon the Lord (Psalm xxvii, 14).

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength (Isaiah xl, 31).

When water is still, it is a perfect level and the greatest artificer takes his rule from it. Such is the clearness of still water and how much greater is that of the human spirit. The still mind of the sage is the mirror of heaven and earth, the glass of all things (Chuang Tse).

If you wish to attain tranquillity of mind and restore its intrinsic purity, you must proceed as you would if you were purifying a jar of muddy water. You must first let it stand until the sediment settles at the bottom. The water will then become clear for you to strain it carefully. So it is with the state of mind troubled by defiling ignorance and passions. When the mind becomes tranquil and harmonized with perfect unity, then all things can be seen, not in their separateness but in their unity, wherein there is no place for passions to enter and which is in full accord with the mysterious and indescribable purity of Nirvana (Surangama Sutra).

Our true life lies at a great depth within us. Our restlessness and weakness are in reality merely the stirrings of the surface. That is why we must daily retire in silence far into the quiet depths of our spirit and experience the real joy within us. If we do this, our words and activities will come to be real also (Tagore).

Even the stillness of body preliminary to stillness of mind will usually be found unexpectedly difficult to achieve. Most of us are more incessantly active than we realize. Often tied to a desk for hours at a time and denied the wholesome gross muscular outlets more commonly available a generation or so ago, we tend to discharge our damned-up energies in a host of fussy activities—drumming with the fingers, wrinkling up the forehead, tensing the jaws unconsciously.

The famous lotus posture of Buddha which Indian teachers have advocated for their pupils from time immemorial is designed to combat such fidgeting, enabling the aspirant to sit erect for long periods with-

out undue restlessness or fatigue. It is not usually, however, a comfortable one for the Westerner. To insist upon it for meditating would be as foolish as to insist that one can only pray when kneeling. The Gita gives more generally useful instructions when it recommends that one 'retire into a solitary place . . . being neither too high nor too low and situated in a cleanly spot . . . posture motionless with body, head and neck held erect.'

The last clause is important. It will often be found that with any effort to concentrate at all continuously the shoulders tend to hunch. This attitude, so common today, is often unconsciously symbolic of an attempt to bear up against the burden and stresses of living; yet in itself it predisposes to further mental tension. It is therefore desirable to cut that vicious circle, first relaxing the shoulders and then giving attention to all other parts of the body in turn; first stretching to the fullest possible extent then completely 'lifting up' arms and legs and all the joints including even those of fingers and toes. The weight of the body should be distributed evenly without slumping, the chair supporting it. The forehead, eyes, mouth, must be relaxed too.

Greater relaxation still can be achieved by slowing down, as far as is possible without discomfort, the rate of breathing. For the slower and deeper the breathing, the more tranquil becomes the mood.

A further effective device to induce calm is to fix the gaze—on a flower in a vase, for instance, or a leaf on a tree outside the window—until a state of reverie or

light trance is induced in which the surroundings no longer impinge and the petty, pressing affairs of life recede from consciousness.

The mind freed, even for fleeting moments, from the preoccupation with non-essentials that too usually beset it, becomes in perfect stillness as the lake that reflects both its own depths and the sky above. In silence, it realizes the divine presence within, finds itself to be one with God, immanent and transcendent. It perceives its unity with the living essence in all things even as deeper consciousness develops of the I, the enduring identity, the divine spark without which it could not exist.

All this is most easily accomplished, at first, by fixing a certain time each day in the same place, in simple, clean and orderly surroundings; preferably in the early morning when the world is still hushed, the mind quiescent after sleep before the cares and problems of life again come flooding into it. To watch the sun rise, if this can be managed, is in itself a valuable experience, calming the mind and predisposing it to a feeling of union with all living things. Once the habit is established, however, it becomes possible and ever easier to induce 'stillness' in oneself and to meditate anywhere at any unoccupied second. Far from encouraging negligence in dealing with everyday affairs, this provides moments of refreshment between one activity and the next. During hours of leisure, too, one can become increasingly happy in meditating. 'The sweep and serenity of a landscape, fields and hills, are enough to keep a contemplative

riding the quiet interior tide of his peace for hours at a time.’⁴

When every *legitimate* opportunity is taken to lay oneself open to the re-creative power within and about one, allowing the mind to become quiescent, the essential unity of life, the ‘One in All Things’ is more and more clearly perceived. One actually experiences, rather than merely intellectually comprehends, the *reality* of the Supreme. The difference between the two processes is as great, as Paul Brunton has pointed out, as poring over a map of Rome and actually going there. The illusion of separateness, which is the fundamental cause of loneliness and unhappiness, disappears and with it the misapprehension that life is without form and meaning.

For, as the Gita promises, when one becomes ‘absorbed in the Atman (God within) and nothing else . . . when . . . the mind ceases its restless movements and becomes still, he realizes the Atman, it satisfies him entirely.’ Professor Radhakrishnan explains: ‘The transcendent self stoops down as it were and touches the eyes of the empirical self, overwhelmed by the delusion of the world’s work. When the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, gathers himself together inwardly and strives with concentration, there breaks upon him an experience, secret, strange and wondrous which quickens within him, lays hold upon him and becomes his very being. . . . Dormant intuition, if it be quickened, will guide us unerringly to our centre, our home in God.’ And again: ‘If we can accept our nothingness, our utter

dependence on that which we so immeasurably are and are not, we discover a Power, a Presence, a Principle, a Mystery (no name can define it) in which all the parts and planes of our being can be harmonized. To go out from this Presence is to come home to it and to find it everywhere. . . . The fountain of creative life will flow into us and through us, when we can open to its cleansing power, to the depth of every soul that has yielded utterly to the flame and the light.⁵

The mind 'becomes one with the object of thought' also, through the practice known in the East as *Japan*. 'Sit silent,' enjoins Tukuram, seventeenth-century poet of Maharastha. 'Sit silent, compose thy mind and invoke God with love. Utter his name time after time. Then happiness will know no bounds. God will certainly reveal himself in thy heart.'

This can, of course, very easily become merely mechanical and repetitive. While even repetition has its value in inducing a certain measure of calm, it is necessary, to obtain full constructive benefit, to concentrate on the meaning behind it. 'One need not think that this prescription for repeating the sacred word is arbitrary and without rational background. In reading a great book one occasionally comes upon a passage that is difficult to understand at first, but if one reads it again and again the meaning suddenly dawns upon the mind. In the same way, by repeating the sacred word, its significance becomes manifest after a certain time to the devotee's mind and heart in such a way that he no longer has any doubt about it. It goes without saying that a difficult passage will not yield its meaning,

in spite of repetition, if the reader does not give full attention to it. In the same way the *Bhakti* (devotee) who repeats the name of God indifferently or mechanically cannot expect to get the same result as one who does so with deep earnestness and concentration.’⁶

One result of meditation in any form, is to find problems large or small solving themselves, the vague apprehensions and irrational fears that so often cloud the whole outlook disappearing. ‘Whatever your problem is,’ says Brunton, ‘do not limit your efforts to intellectual solution and unaided reason. Take your difficulty into the white light of the Overself and there find guidance to settle it for you. This will obliterate fear, depression and materialism from the mind. . . . All who truly resign themselves to the Higher Power receive its protective aid. The power of the Overself is with you here and now. The Divinity within will unfailingly meet your true needs at the appointed time. . . . When the inner divinity handles the reins, you will be led aright, for it is wiser than you.’⁷ Daily nourishing the soul by meditation one becomes conscious of new ability to meet everyday problems. Inspiration pours in upon the mind tuned to receive it. Self-hypnosis? If this is the explanation, how can one account for the constructive fluid effect that not only liberates one’s thinking but stimulates purposeful action that has none of the stereotyped character of that hypnotically induced?

The tonic vitalizing effects of meditation, which help unbelievably in developing and maintaining a deep persistent contentment less vulnerable to the

distresses of life than any to be found on the purely physical or purely intellectual level, are indicated by many modern writers who are more philosophical than specifically religious in their trend. Thus John Cowper Powys writes: 'One of the chief causes of unhappiness in the world is that our mind is pre-occupied all the while with the relation of other human minds. Free yourself from this. Make the friendliest and kindest retreat you can into solitude and in a few moments your nature will have bathed itself so deeply in the cool depths of being that you will feel able to return to the troubling arena of humanity with an inviolable and secret strength.'⁸

Karl Jaspers says: 'Man finds meaning in life by a leap into another dimension. . . . We men cannot do without our daily moments of profound reflection. In them we recapture our Self-awareness, lest the presence of the primal source be lost entirely amid the inevitable distractions of daily living. . . . If I meditate, an imponderable presence, which can never be forced, may come to me . . . bringing with it a peace of mind amidst life's constant turmoil, a trust in the foundations of things despite the most terrible catastrophes, unswerving resolve amid the vacillations of passion, a firm loyalty amid the momentary lures of this world. . . . Meditation will provide the dominant tone that carries me through the day in its countless activities, even while I am being swept along by the technical machine. For in these moments, when I return home, as it were to myself, I acquire an underlying harmony which persists behind the moods and

movements of the day, which sustains me amid all my derailments, confusion, emotional upheaval, does not let me sink into the abyss. For these moments give to the present both memory and future, give my life both cohesion and continuity.’⁹

St. Augustine describes the process and result thus: ‘I entered into my innermost self, thou being my guide. I entered and beheld with the eyes of my soul, above my mind, the light unchangeable. . . . It was something altogether different from any earthly illumination. . . . He who knows the truth knows that light and who knows that light knows eternity.’

How? ‘If I could tell that,’ as John Middleton Murray writes in his book, *God*, ‘If I could tell that, I should tell a secret indeed. But a moment came when the darkness of the ocean changed to light, the cold to warmth; when it swept in one great wave over the shores and frontiers of myself; when it bathed me and I was renewed; when the room was filled with a presence and I knew I was not alone—that I never could be alone anymore, that the universe beyond held no menace for I was part of it; that in some way, for which I had sought in vain for so many years, I belonged and because I belonged I was no longer I but something different, which could never be afraid in the old way or cowardly with the old cowardice.’

For through meditation we come to know ourselves as part of the whole. ‘A drop of water is a little thing but when will it die away if united to a lake?’ By entering into the Reality of which we represent so

Yoga of Meditation

The way of meditation just considered in which the aim and method is to empty the mind of all temporal concerns is known as 'Meditation without Seed'. The way now to be discussed, in which some definite thought is entertained with the purpose of concentrating upon the idea or ideas behind it, is known as 'Meditation with Seed'. In this, likewise, the steady attempt to exclude everything else from consciousness is made, inducing stillness and concentration by the means already suggested.

Meditation with seed can take the form of dwelling upon one of the known and more easily grasped attributes of God—as expression of love, as immanent presence, as creator of all things; upon man as an essential expression, in his divine aspect, of God; of the human spirit never beginning, never ending; of death as an incident in existence, *etc.*
 a fresh phase.

It can take the form also of visualizing one or other of the great world teachers. Not only does the individuality of the Avatar then become clearer, revealing itself in more intimate aspect, but his teachings will soon reveal more and more of their deeper significance. In much the same way, concentration on a verse or

passage from suitable writings—extracting the deeper meaning by keeping the mind steadily upon it, dwelling with attention on each word composing it, reflecting upon it until the inner meaning of the whole phrase is fixed in the mind—subtly and deeply influences the whole point of view. ‘We examine the different sides, one after another, find in it correlations and analogies with everything known, thought or heard before. It shows depths about which it never occurred to a man to think and, above all, brings him nearer to the new consciousness, flashes of which like lightning begin to illumine his meditations. . . The man who has learned to contemplate awakens the higher faculties of his soul, lays himself open to influences which come from higher spheres of life and, as it were, communes with the deeper mysteries of the universe.’¹

Meditation of this kind has been brought to a fine art in India as the following extract from *The Autobiography of a Yogi*² indicates: ‘Dahru Balleu had gathered his disciples around him in the sylvan solitudes—the holy Bhagavad-Gita was open before him. . . . They looked at one passage for half-slipped away. The master gave a brief comment. Motionless, they meditated again for an hour. Finally the guru spoke.

“Have you understood?”

“Yes, sir.” One of the group ventured this assertion.

“No, not fully. Seek the spiritual vitality that has given these words the power to rejuvenate India

century after century." Another hour disappeared in silence. The master dismissed the students. . . .

'Sri Vukeswar directed the study of his own disciples by the same intensive method of one-pointedness. "Wisdom is not assimilated with the eyes," he said. "When your conviction of truth is not merely in your brain but in your being, you may diffidently vouch for its meaning."'

Few in the Western world have sufficient time or sufficient self-control thus to spend long hours. Yet even a few minutes of meditation along such lines every day will make an amazing difference to the whole outlook—furnishing the daily income, as it were, for daily expenditure in constructive action.

The mind spiritually nourished upon sound ideas which soon come to form a *leit-motif* of all thought becomes conscious of a new ability both to meet everyday problems with understanding and effectually to cope with them. The words: 'Sufficient unto the day . . .' now reveal their full meaning.

Concentration is strengthened. The mind, so often allowed to dissipate its energies in roving restlessly from one topic to another, is disciplined and focused when trained to dwell on one idea, thus acquiring the 'intensity of a burning glass' where before its thoughts were diffused and consequently largely inoperative.

The words 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he' are discovered in actual practice to hold the deep significance of all the sayings of Jesus. The will is increasingly controlled and directed; begins to act increasingly, despite the lapses that may occur, in

accordance with the ideas that saturate all thinking. Banished is that wretched frame of mind which St. Paul so aptly expressed when he complained: 'Those things which I will, I do not and those things which I will not, those I do.' His question, asked in different forms all through the centuries by those conscious of the same lack of drive: 'O wretched man that I am, who can save me from the body of this death?' is realistically answered. For conflict is obviated in the release and the new ability for integrated action which disciplined meditation brings.

SOME PRELIMINARY MEDITATIONS

Speaking of his *Seeds of Contemplation* and other books that can be used for this purpose, Thomas Merton explains that 'They achieve an effect that cannot be controlled by any human author. If you can read them in communion with the God in whose presence they were written, you will draw fruit from them more by His grace than by the author's efforts.'

The extracts now given, taken from writings of this kind, may be found useful as preliminary to the books recommended below.

The Kingdom of Heaven is within you and whosoever shall know himself, shall find it (Luke xvii, 21).

God is Love (I John iv, 8).

God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth (John iv, 24).

I am the vital breath. I am the conscious self.
Worship me as life, he who worships me as life,
as immortality obtains full life in this world
(Upanisads).

He is the core of the heart of love and He, beyond
labouring seas, our ultimate shore (Edith Sitwell).

Before beginning and without end
As space eternal and as surely sure
Is fixed a Power divine that moves to good
Only its laws endure (Sir Edwin Arnold).

One nature, perfect and pervading, eventuates in all
Nature
One Reality, all comprehensive, contains in itself all
ultimate Realities
The one moon reflects itself wherever there is a
sheet of water
And all the moons in all the waters are embraced
in the one moon (Chuang Tze).

God is the object of the world's desire (Aristotle).

In the Absolute, we live and move and have our
being (Henri Bergson).

One interior life
In which all beings live with God, themselves
Are God, existing in the mighty whole,
As indistinguishable as the cloudless East
Is from the cloudless West, when all
The atmosphere is one cerulean blue (Wordsworth).

He is myself within the heart, smaller even than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed. He is also myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds (Upanisads).

Happiness is neither without nor within us; it is in God both without us and within us (Pascal).

We lie in the lap of immense intelligence which makes us organs of its activity and receivers of its truth. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves but allow a passage of its beams (Emerson).

What is man? An angel, a void, a world, a nothing, surrounded by God, indigent of God, capable of God, filled with God if it so desires (Berullé).

The spiritual world is our true home. Salvation consists of deliverance from the world of change and decay (Dean Inge).

BOOKS FOR MEDITATION

In addition to the New Testament, particularly the gospels, and the Bhagavad-Gita both as translated by Radhakrishnan (Allen and Unwin) and by Prabhavananda and Isherwood. (Phoenix Press); the following books will be found to provide valuable material:

The Light of Asia. Sir Edwin Arnold. (Routledge, Kegan Paul.)

The Song Celestial. Sir Edwin Arnold. (Routledge, Kegan Paul.)

The Perennial Philosophy. Aldous Huxley. (Chatto & Windus.)

A Year of Grace. Victor Gollancz. (Gollancz.)

Thoughts for Meditation. Gangulee. (Faber & Faber.)

Thoughts for Aspirants. Sri Ram. (Adhar.)

Gatanjali. Rabindranath Tagore. (Macmillan.)

Seek Paradise. Constance Sitwell. (Cape.)

The First and Last Freedom. Krishnamurti. (Gollancz.)

Basic Ethic

When St. Augustine summed up the one ethical requirement of the Perennial Philosophy in the words 'Love and do as you like', he could not have meant the sticky, sentimental attitude with which love is too often confused but rather the vital constructive one based on consciousness of unity.

This is the unity Marcus Aurelius discerned when he described the universe as 'one living being possessed of a single substance and a single soul. How intertwined in the fabric is the thread and how closely woven the web!' Consciousness of this finds expression in the attitude the authors of the Upanisads described, centuries ago. 'As one's life is dear to himself, so also is that of all beings. The good show compassion toward all living beings because of their resemblance to themselves. . . . The good show pity even for worthless beings—the moon withholds not its light from the hovel of the outcast. . . . "Is this one of our own tribe or a stranger?" is the calculation of the narrow-minded but to one of noble disposition, the world itself is but one family.'

This is the attitude stressed by all the great religions. Recognizing that the Eternal Self pervades all things,

the significance of Jesus' injunction to call nothing and no man common or unclean becomes apparent. The necessary sequence of his two great commandments also becomes obvious. Love of God must result in love of the neighbour as vehicle of the Eternal Self whether or not his particular personality happens to hold appeal for us.

The Talmud insists: 'What is harmful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah. Go learn it.'

The Zoroastrian scriptures direct: 'Whether one is Lord of little or much, let him show love. . . .'

The Buddhist texts point out the constructive effect of love. 'Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time. Hatred ceases by love. . . . Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality. . . . To him in whom love dwells, all the world are brothers.'

The Confucian scriptures say simply: 'Love all men'; The Taoist: 'Keep on good terms with men. He who loves the world as he does his own body can be entrusted with the world. . . . The universe and I came into being together and I and everything therein are one. Everything has Tao within it and continues to produce it without end.'

The various codes, though modified by the phase of man's development at which they were evolved, are all based on the necessity for maintaining a positive attitude to others.

The Ten Commandments, for instance, based on the need for a wandering people to live in amity, stress

not only on duty to God but the need to avoid injuring others.

Similarly, the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddha, as rendered by Sir Edwin Arnold in the 'Light of Asia', stresses above all the necessity for goodwill:

The first good level is *Right Doctrine*. Walk

In fear of Dharma, shunning all offence;
In heed of Karma, which doth make man's fate;
In lordship ever sense.

The Second is *Right Purpose*. Have good will

To all that lives, letting unkindness die
And greed and wrath; so that your lives be made
Like soft airs passing by.

The Third is *Right Discourse*. Govern the lips

As they were palace doors, the King within;
Tranquil and fair and courteous be all words
Which from that presence win.

The fourth is *Right Doctrine*. Let each act

Assail a fault or let a merit, grow;
Like threads of silver seen through crystal beads
Let love through good deeds show.

Similarly, *Right Means of Livelihood* is based on harmlessness, on eschewing any form of gain that may bring sorrow or suffering to any creature. *Right Effort* rest on self-control. *Right Attention* is based on the recollectedness that ensures that no evil is done through thoughtlessness. *Right Contemplation* is based on withdrawal into the Self to realize who one really is, when

it will become impossible to cause grief to anyone with whom one comes into contact.

What happens when there is no consciousness of unity, when the love that is the outcome of this is lacking, is indicated by Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden in the interesting play: *The Ascent of A*.7. Mr. and Mrs. A., acting as the mouthpiece of the *vox populi*, express sterility of outlook in every word they utter.

When Mr. A, arriving home, asks what has happened while he has been away, Mrs. A. gloomily replies:

‘A slick and unctuous time
Has sold us yet another shop-soiled day,’

a theme she continues to elaborate with instances of the small incidents of neighbourhood life which bore her to extinction since lovelessness prevents her from discerning any significance in them. Mr. A. breaks in to agree:

‘No nothing that matters will ever happen
Nothing you’d want to put in a book,
Nothing to tell to impress your friends . . .
The old, old story that never ends.
The eight o’clock train, the customary place
Holding the paper in front of your face . . .
Nothing interesting to do
Nothing interesting to say
Nothing remarkable in any way . . .
Then the journey home again

By the fast suburban train
To the tawdry new estate
Crumpled, grubby, dazed and late;
Home to supper and to bed.
Will it be like this when we're dead?

The aetiology of this bored, uninspired attitude is obvious, no less so its self-defeating results.

Naturally intelligence is needed to avoid becoming the victim of the unprincipled. Jesus implied this when he warned his disciples: 'Behold I send you out a sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' A specific instance of the need for good sense in this respect is given by Paul Brunton in one of his books. An Indian sage sent one of his pupils to buy a cooking pot. The boy returned with one that leaked that the shopkeeper had palmed off on him. 'Why did you not examine the pot before buying it?' asked his master. 'Saintliness need not mean dumbness. Divine perception is not incapacitating!'

The injunction that one must love one's neighbour *as*, not better than, oneself, is increasingly recognized today as psychologically sound. Thus Erich Fromm writes in *Psychoanalysis and Religion*: 'My own self is as much the object of my love as another person. The affirmation of my own happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in the basic readiness and ability for such an affirmation. If an individual has this readiness he has it also towards himself; if he can only "love" others, he cannot love at all.

'Selfishness is not identical with self-love but with its very opposite. Selfishness is one kind of greediness.

Like all greediness it contains insatiability, as a consequence of which there is never any real satisfaction. Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without reaching satisfaction. Close observation shows that while the selfish person is always anxiously concerned with himself, he is never satisfied, is always restless, always driven by the fear of not getting enough, of missing something, of being deprived of something. He is filled with burning envy of anyone who might have more. If we observe still closer, especially the unconscious dynamics, we find that this type of person is basically not fond of himself but deeply dislikes himself.

‘The puzzle in this seeming contradiction is easy to solve. Selfishness is rooted in this very lack of fondness for oneself. The person who is not fond of himself, who does not approve of himself, is in constant anxiety concerning his own self. He has not the inner security which can exist only on the basis of genuine fondness and affirmation. He must be concerned about himself, greedy to get everything for himself, since basically he lacks security and satisfaction.’

We lack this satisfaction, hate ourselves (and therefore others) only when we fail to discern, beyond the petty egotism of personality, the illimitable Atman within.

Not only in the consulting-room but in its application to the problems of education, modern psychology emphasizes the positive view. Love is more and more recognized as the foundation stone, the solution to all

problems of child-care. It has been found that in institutions where the personal touch is lacking, babies, however otherwise well cared for, tend to sicken, even to die. Nourished on orange juice and cod-liver oil and all other adjuncts of the latest, best-balanced diets, children brought up *en masse* may yet compare unfavourably with the children of the slums sitting on the door-step blissfully sucking the piece of bread and jam on which flies thickly congregate—whose mothers, ignorant though they may be, really love them. Similarly, homes and schools where intelligent love prevails produce children who grow up both confidently and amenably. Even children not so happily placed, who have drifted into the ranks of juvenile delinquents, can be reclaimed by love—as has been shown by men like Homer Lane who set many a young criminal on the right road again by the enlightened methods which obtained in his 'Little Commonwealth'. The positive effects of such constructive methods are increasingly shown by the more progressive modern reformatories.

Constructive love remains the only answer to the individual, social, national and international problems which confront us today, the only force which can arrest the wave of destruction which has its repercussions on all aspects of living in our times.

Yoga of Action

'Far from being essentially opposed to activity, internal contemplation and external activity are aspects of the same love for God. But the activity of the contemplative must be born of his contemplation and must resemble it. Everything he does outside of contemplation ought to reflect the luminous tranquillity of his inner life.'¹

Thomas Merton thus effectually disposes of the too prevalent idea that the life of the spirit is one of inertia, of withdrawal from the field of action. To refuse to accept the limited values of the world does not imply evading the relatively infinitesimal amount of work one is capable of doing.

In its attitude to work, as in so many other respects, the Gita is completely practical and its conclusions are as suited to modern needs as to the time at which it was written.

'Activity is better than inertia,' it states. Centuries before Freud, its authors knew that if energy is not utilized it will run to waste, that constructive activity is an important means of sublimation.

If a man plays no part
In the acts thus appointed

His living is evil
His joy is in lusting.

Nor is work merely a safeguard, it is a safety-valve for anxiety. Brooding over the inevitable difficulties and problems of living intensifies this whereas constructive action tends to dispel it. The whole theory of occupational therapy is based on the possibility of resolving by suitable work the depressions and fears to which convalescents are often subject.

Even where it is not necessary to earn a livelihood the Gita further maintains that work is ethically essential.

Doing of duty
Honours the devas (*inhabitants of Heaven*)
But he who enjoys the deva's bounty
Showing no thanks
He thieves from the devas.

There is certainly enough voluntary work needing to be done to render it unnecessary for anyone to be idle, whatever the circumstances.

But it is in emphasizing the only effective *attitude* to work that the Gita strikes its most characteristic note. 'The world is imprisoned in its own activity, except where actions are performed as worship of God. Therefore you must perform every action sacramentally and be free from all attachment to results.'

Is this practicable? That one should be disinterested in one's motives may be conceded, even though this is often regarded as a counsel of perfection, but to

concentrate on work without regard for result is not a point of view that readily appeals. Most of us have been taught from our earliest days the praiseworthiness of developing and realizing various ambitions. Yet the Gita has an answer to this, too. 'Work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done without such anxiety in the calm of self-surrender.'

This is obviously true. Haste, one of the main causes of the nervous tension which is increasingly shown today to have such serious widespread results on body and mind, is detrimental to efficiency.

'Those who work selfishly for results are miserable.' This also proves true in practice. Hope dashed when the result of action appears incommensurate with all the effort put into it makes for deep disappointment. It is obviously more rewarding in itself to give the assiduous attention to the sowing and watering that the psalmist recommended, without undue anxiety as to the harvest. It is this attitude that enables us to be 'even-minded in success and failure', as the Gita recommends. To work with undivided energy, unloaded with the tensions induced by acquisitiveness, unburdened by useless regrets for the past or painful expectancy as to the future is to find satisfaction in the present.

Therefore:

Do thine allotted task . . .
With spirit unattached, gladly perform
That action which is duty.
Since in performance of plain duty,
Man mounts to his highest bliss.

Non-Attachment

The non-attached attitude to work, which is really the common-sense constructive one, applies equally to living in general.

It implies living in the present, ungraspingly, without attempting to snatch at things and make them one's own. It stems from the refusal to deify any finite thing whatever, refusal to invest the material with an importance it cannot, being finite, possess.

It does *not* imply laissez-faire, or passive acceptance of mitigable evils, least of all lack of delight in living. Paradoxically small pleasures and common things are found to yield much more happiness when recognized for what they are—*partial* realities in the sense that they manifest only dimly and incompletely the Divinity within them. When one ceases to look to the ephemeral for an enduring satisfaction it is incapable of giving, its transience no longer distresses one. The gnawing dissatisfaction that comes of trying to find completeness and perfection in the essential imperfection and incompleteness of all material things disappears. It becomes possible to enjoy them for what they are and nostalgic dread of their passing is tempered. For what passes, it is now perceived, is only the

temporary expression of the enduring living essence of things which invests them with loveliness.

To be non-attached is really to be free, as Tagore has indicated.

‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it wrought this unbreakable chain?’

‘It was I,’ said the prisoner, ‘who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive, leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus day and night I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip.’

It is easy to be deluded into accepting possession as a symbol of security, yet when freed from preoccupation with ‘me’ and ‘mine’ one loses nothing and is saved much bother and anxiety. ‘Everything is ours providing that we regard nothing as our property. And not only is it ours but is also everybody else’s.’¹

The principle of non-attachment applies equally to personal relationships. To hold on to a relationship that has lost its meaning or seek arbitrarily to impose more obligation on anyone else than the practical necessities of the situation require is to rob any emotional bond of its flexibility, rendering it static and sterile. Living, growing organisms must have freedom to develop—a freedom that can only be offered to others by those who, recognizing the basis of the universe to be spiritual, discover in living a fluid quality that makes it intrinsically worthwhile on its

own merits and hence do not look to others for a satisfaction only to be found in the Self. Far from precluding companionship, the non-attached attitude enhances its dynamic quality.

Take, for instance, the parent-child relationship. How much misery is avoided when the child is accepted as an individual who needs to develop along his own individual lines! Children are not investments either in security or happiness, begotten to realize aims the parent may deeply have cherished but personally failed to achieve. As modern psychology teaches, they are people in their own right who can only flourish when accepted for what they are and what they can become. This involves fostering development by timely help and counsel as opportunity occurs, a process of which, obviously, only the genuinely non-attached, unpossessive adult is capable. It does *not* mean letting children do as they like but rather providing constructive training that seeks not to mould according to some preconceived idea, but rather to encourage wholesome development. And when the responsibility is discharged, when the child has been influenced as wholesomely and constructively as possible during the phase of life that impinges closely upon that of the parents there will be no attempt to hold him. Guidance will be offered but no interference with choice of occupation or livelihood. There will be a willing standing aside to give opportunity for pursuing the individual ideals which, if previous training has been sound, will prove as trustworthy at this later stage as the training previously

necessary. In the same way, when son or daughter marries, the enlightened parent will not hold on to the relationship in a form it has now outgrown, recognizing that the bond that still naturally exists must yet be flexible enough to change its mode of expression when circumstances indicate the need.

Few of us achieve non-attachment to such a degree that the ups and downs inevitable in a world of partial realities and fallible human beings do not cause at least surface ripples of disquiet. To develop the spiritual view does, however, make it unnecessary to temper action with the false discretion that comes of believing that happiness depends on certain things or people. It is to live, not negligently, but care-free and fearlessly, realizing that it is the present, rich in constructive possibilities, that counts.

The greater number of our everyday fears arise, after all, less about today than tomorrow. Shall we be able to maintain the *status quo*? Shall we be able to keep up our accustomed standards of living? Shall we be able to retain the affection of the friend, the interest of the lover we care for so deeply?

Life and human nature being what they are, we can of course be certain of none of these things—less certain on the whole in the world of today than perhaps ever before. Fortunes may disappear overnight, shares slump without warning, circumstances disrupt relationships.

Yet surely one adjusts better to misfortune, and is even on the whole more likely to avert it by discharging responsibilities, both practical and emotional,

as efficiently and generously as possible, attending to the immediate needs of any situation without dissipating energy in unprofitable directions by forming a rigid and probably false picture of the future. *'Sufficient unto the day. . . .'*

As Emerson wrote: 'We are begirt with spiritual laws that execute themselves. Why need you choose so painfully your place and occupation and associates and mode of action and entertainment? Certainly there is a possible right for you that precludes the need of balance and wilful election. For you there is a reality, a fit place and congenial duties. Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom that flows into you as life; place yourself in the full stream of that flood, then you are without effort impelled to truth, to right and a perfect contentment.'²

Set free from unnecessary and abortive anxiety, we are able to enjoy life to the full. When the mind is poised yet relaxed, it is free to perceive such unexpected incredible loveliness as the deep petunia glow on the dove's neck, the silver that flashes on the seagull's wing, the tiny flowers that sometimes, somehow, force their way through the cement even of the most urban backyard. . . . The smell of the sea, the tang of the seawind, the warmth of the sun, the fragrance of grass can be appreciated to the full. Books, music, pictures, yield up their fullest treasure to the unperturbed mind. The joy of a craft enchants when creative ability is valued for its own sake, and ready-made, expensive, abortive pleasures lose their allure.

Does this attitude destroy ambition? Of the obvious

kind we agree thankfully that it does. Is there anything very alluring in acquisitiveness? Or anything truly productive? Ambition in the ordinary sense did not motivate scientists like Einstein (who once asked my sister and myself to take him to view London from the top of a bus rather than by car 'because one can see more'); or scholars like Smuts (who preferred all his life to sleep on a camp-bed in the simplest surroundings); or humanitarians like Schweitzer (who gave up brilliant careers in music, theology and philosophy and took a medical degree in order to help those living in the most plague-infested spot he could find on the globe).

As Socrates taught, to reduce one's wants is to live as the gods. Even in these days it is possible without being conspicuously cranky to maintain in spirit the attitude Chaucer advocates in his 'Ballade of Good Counsel':

Flee from the crowd and dwell with truthfulness,
Suffice thee with thy goods, though they be small.
To hoard brings hate, to climb brings giddiness;
The crowd has envy and success blinds all;
Desire no more than to thy lot may fall. . . .
What God doth send, receive in gladness,
To wrestle for this world, foretells a fall.
Here is no home, here is but wilderness,
Forth, pilgrim, forth; up, beast, and leave thy stall!
Know thy country, look up, thank God for all.
Hold the highway, thy soul the pioneer
And truth shall make thee free, there is no fear!
Therefore, poor beast, forsake thy wretchedness;
No longer let the vain world be thy stall.

For yesterday is already a dream
And tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well-lived, makes every yesterday
A dream of happiness
And every tomorrow
A vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!
Such is the salutation of the dawn!

Fallacy

Human beings have the ingrained tendency to exploit things to their own advantage. Even religion is not immune.

Right back in the days of the Gita, warning against confusing spiritual and material issues seems to have been needed.

Be thou . . . free
 From that sad righteousness which calculates
 . . . Find full reward
 Of doing right in right. Let right deeds
 Be thy motive, not the fruit that comes from them.

In the days of St. Augustine, such counsel was similarly apparently necessary. 'Picture God as saying to you: "My son, my son, why is it that day by day you rise and pray and even strike the ground with your forehead, nay sometimes even shed tears while you say to me, 'My father, my God, give me wealth'. Because you ask for it you have it. But take care to make good use of it. Before you had it, you were humble; now that you are rich you despise the poor. What kind of good is that which only makes you worse? . . . Ask of me better things than these. Ask of Me, Myself.'"

It is only during the last seventy years or so, however, that, organizations definitely linking religion with material reward have obtained an increasing hold—the greater because by making use of principles that bear a certain superficial resemblance to those of the Perennial Philosophy (as promulgated by Emerson) their teachings contain just enough truth to make them difficult to confute.

The rapid growth of these cults reflects the contemporary spiritual hunger as well as the contemporary distrust of orthodoxy, yet their materialistic bias (though camouflaged by the misuse of certain sayings of Jesus) fits in only too well with the current tendency to wrest everything possible from life instead of living it.

The new cults have certainly got away from the idea of a God of Vengeance and represent God rather as the loving father Jesus taught Him to be—yet a father apparently prone to an indiscriminate indulgence of which only the most foolish, spineless human father would be guilty. By 'thinking rightly' and by soliciting this god of his imagination, man is apparently both justified in seeking and able to attract unlimited 'prosperity' and 'abundance'. The words 'ask and it shall be given you' are lifted out of their context and thus deprived of their spiritual meaning, being used to provide the assurance that what you want you can get—if you want it and ask for it persistently enough.

Man is nominally represented as the spiritual being he is rather than as the miserable sinner he has been

too often represented to be, but no distinction is made between his *potential* divinity and his all-too-obvious humanity. Far from emphasizing the necessity for subordinating transient personality to enduring individuality, the teachings of the bland and prosperous prophets of the new cults imply that man, being divine, can and should control his own destiny. He is represented not as a being made in the image of God, potentially able to reflect certain attributes of God, but rather as God himself.

These specious teachings do often appear to produce quite extraordinary results and it is not surprising that crowds gather to listen to them, to witness 'demonstrations of faith' that seem more often to be demonstrations of cupidity and to receive booklets in which much wholesome spiritual advice and competent instruction on meditation are strangely intermingled with counsels as to thinking into existence purses filled with gold.

Because the leaders of these cults set themselves to free their hearers from guilt, fear and other destructive emotions, using ideas which even in their warped form retain some of their original potency, many are at least temporarily relieved of such ills as anxiety states, alcoholism and drug habits, even of certain diseases which appear to be wholly physical but which modern medicine increasingly reveals to be the result of tension induced by negative moods. Release from such emotions obviously increases efficiency and this leads to improved circumstances. Naturally, too, if one concentrates on the accom-

plishment of a specific end, all other considerations being subordinated to it, it is not seldom achieved. One leader, for instance, who had advised one of his followers who wanted a change of air to repeat over and over again that she was going on a 'divinely appointed holiday', was able gleefully to announce, among many similar 'answers to prayer', that the holiday had duly been obtained!

Yet it remains true that: 'Petitionary and intercessory prayer may be used and used, what is more, with what would be ordinarily regarded as success, without any but the most perfunctory and superficial reference to God in any of his aspects. To acquire the knack of getting his petitions answered, a man does not have to know or love God or even know or love the image of God in the human mind. All that he requires is a burning sense of the importance of his own ego and its desires, coupled with a firm conviction that there exists out there in the universe, something not himself that can be wheedled or dragooned into satisfying these desires. If I repeat "My will be done" with the necessary degree of faith and persistence, the chances are that sooner or later and somehow or other, I shall get what I want. Whether I shall get what is spiritually, morally or even materially good for me are questions I cannot answer in advance. Only time and eternity will show. . . . Meanwhile, we shall be well advised to heed the warnings of folk-lore. The anonymous realists who wrote the world's fairy tales knew a great deal about wish fulfilments. . . . Hardly ever

do the three wishes of our traditional folk-lore lead to anything but a bad end for the successful wisher.’¹

Are ‘prosperity’ and ‘abundance’ legitimate spiritual objectives? Jesus does not appear to have thought so any more than he implied on the other hand, that the spiritual seeker should masochistically embrace ideals of destitution and ill-health. There is no evidence that Jesus lacked what he needed but he refused to fetter himself with possessions. His advice to the apostles as to their equipment is as well known as his advice to the rich young ruler and both reflect the essential simplicity of his tastes. In all his work, moreover, he followed the principle behind that great injunction of his, ‘Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of Heaven’. He provided spiritual food before loaves and fishes for the crowds on the shores of Gallilee just as he forgave the sins of the man stricken with palsy, thus liberating him spiritually, before bidding him take up his bed and walk. Buddha gave up his palaces and great possessions to don the saffron robe. It is indeed impossible to imagine any great spiritual teacher seeking ‘prosperity’.

Challenged, these modern prophets explain that by prosperity and abundance they really mean sufficiency, that by success they mean spiritual success, materially interpreted. Yet despite this ingenious private vocabulary, the subtle odour of exploitation clings. . . .

Religion is not a bargain counter. There is something that repels in the idea of putting a penn’orth of faith in the slot and drawing out a refrigerator or a clean bill of health or whatever else may be required

at the moment. When teachings which appeal to man's inherent tendency to self-interest bear a superficial resemblance to basic sacred teachings which have come down to us through the ages, the position becomes seriously misleading.

It is not disputed that miracles of spiritual healing do occur. Dr. Alexis Carrel, for instance, records in his *Journey to Lourdes* the instantaneous cure of an advanced case of tubercular peritonitis, previously pronounced incurable by several eminent diagnosticians. This, like many others of the same kind, seems to have been based, however, on faith in the true sense, not on a 'faith' that barter, and really rests on a lively expectation of specific evidence of divine favour, on a 'faith' embraced in order to secure it.

It is not disputed either that religion (when interpreted in the true sense of binding man to God) proves actively helpful in the conduct of life. Alignment with the creative constructive Power pervading the universe must obviously result in increased efficiency on all levels. The mind will become more incisive, the body will tend to become stronger, as they hinder less and less the clear functioning of the Spirit. Increased ability to cope with circumstances inevitably results but this is the mark of something far more important than any material success. The practical therapeutic effect of sound religion has been notably demonstrated by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale of the Marble Collegiate Church in New York and his psychiatrist co-worker, Dr. S. Blanton, but their several books on the subject emphasize the

function of practical religion in stimulating adequate living, do not hold out specific material inducements.

The conscious, or even unconscious adoption of religion for purposes of gain may be characteristic of a certain stage of development but it is undesirable to fixate it by catering for it. Disastrous too. Either the expected, but quite erroneously termed, 'demonstration of faith' occurs—in which case the beneficiary is confirmed in his delusion that religion is designed to make a man healthy and wealthy; or it does not—in which case he will probably lose what passes for faith and find, for a long time, nothing to replace it.

One naturally hesitates to belittle any sincere attempt to bring happiness or health to others yet anyone with a genuine love for the teachings of the Perennial Philosophy must protest against their distortion and exploitation.

The Body as Vehicle

Does spiritual living necessitate denying ourselves the ordinary pleasures of this phase of our existence?

Certainly plain living has always been associated with high thinking. With reason. Preoccupation with non-essentials clearly hinders spiritual development and over-indulgence in any form clogs the workings of the bodily instrument we use at this stage of our evolution.

Plain living, however, does not imply masochistic denial of legitimate bodily needs. This is obviously apt to focus undue attention upon them. Control and direction of the physical urges and their subordination in the interests of total healthful living are needed—not repression. The crude expression of lust has to be tempered by love to yield full contentment; sleep is blissfully recuperative only when it is sufficient, not excessive; the satisfaction of the zestful hunger that comes of perfect physical well-being is lost when it degenerates into greed. St. François de Sales summed up the matter very happily when he said that the spirit cannot endure the body if over-fed but that if under-fed the body cannot endure the spirit.

A wiser, more balanced attitude this, surely, than that of the Curé d'Ars who would not smell a rose

for fear of the sensual delight it would give him! An exaggerated, probably unique view, yet it is as well to disabuse ourselves of any idea that austerity *for its own sake*, even could we achieve it, has anything to commend it.

This is delightfully illustrated by Rabindranath Tagore:¹

At midnight, the would-be ascetic announced:
'This is the time to give up my home and seek for God.

Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here?' God whispered 'I' but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast, lay his wife,
Peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.
The man said, 'Who are ye that fooled me so long?'
The voice said again, 'They are God' but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home' but still he heard it not.

God sighed and complained, 'Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me?'

Surely when man is recognized as a spiritual being, the importance of the present phase of existence becomes obvious and respect for the body, as the vehicle through which, during this phase, we function, must increase? It clearly requires and merits intelligent care and consideration, operating in consequence

more effortlessly and efficiently and smoothly, promoting that deep enjoyment of living that is the reflection of total health.

This was recognized back in the days of the Upanisads. The Katha Upanisad, for instance, clearly expresses what psycho-somatic medicine increasingly reveals, that man is an intimate blend of body and mind. Spiritual, emotional and physical well-being are inter-dependent.

‘Know the Self to be sitting in the chariot, the body to be the chariot, the intellect the charioteer and the mind the reins. The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses their roads. When he (the Highest Self) is in unison with the body, the senses and the mind, the wise people call him the Enjoyer.’²

No hint of repressive discipline here, no emphasis on an austerity as narrow and painful as it is meaningless. It is recognized that a joyless body devitalized, antagonized by too severe a regime, is likely to be as unresponsive to the behests of the spirit as the pampered over-indulged one. And, centuries later, the Gita comments (as Freud might have commented): ‘The abstinent run away from their desires but carry their desires with them’ and warns specifically against ‘the austerity practised out of self-pride or to gain notoriety’ or ‘for the excitement of self-torture’.

The great world teachers certainly advocated a moderate mode of living for their followers rather than one of great austerity.

Jesus called the body the temple of the Spirit and

appears to have led the simple hardy life conducive to optimum health yet he also contributed to the gaiety of the wedding feast. His injunction that a man should not set his wife aside for any cause but adultery lest he cause her to commit adultery certainly indicates, too, that he did not under-estimate the importance of the normal body urges.

Buddha, also, so often believed to counsel extreme austerity, in fact enjoined moderation. The first discourse ascribed to him emphasizes this:

‘There are two extremes, monks, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid.

‘What are these two extremes: A life given to pleasure and devoted to lusts; this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble and profitless.

‘And a life given to mortification; this is painful, ignoble and profitless.

‘By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the Enlightened One has gained the knowledge which leads to insight which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to supreme enlightenment, to Nirvana’²

The Gita speaks of austerity but this is of the purposeful kind, designed for constructive living, not embraced as an ideal for its own sake.

‘Reverence to the devas, the seers, the teachers and the sages, straightforwardness, harmlessness, physical cleanliness and sexual purity; these are the virtues whose practice is called austerity of the body.

‘To speak without ever causing harm to another, to be truthful, to say always what is kind and beneficial and to study the scriptures regularly, this practice is called austerity of speech.

‘The practice of serenity, sympathy, meditation upon the Atman, withdrawal of the mind from sense objects and integrity of motive is called austerity of mind.

‘Practice this threefold austerity with enlightened faith and no desire for reward.’

More specifically the Gita emphasizes: ‘Yoga is not for the man who over-eats nor for him who fasts excessively. It is not for him who sleeps too much nor for the keeper of exaggerated vigils. Let a man be moderate in his eating and his recreation, moderately active, moderate in sleep and wakefulness.’

Nor can the advice of the Gita, here as elsewhere so much in line with modern knowledge, be bettered when it recommends foods that are ‘juicy soothing, fresh and agreeable which add to the pleasure of mental and physical life’ and the avoidance of those that are ‘sour, salty, hot, pungent, acid and burning . . . stale, tasteless, impure and rotten’—those foods in fact that in over-stimulating the palate create false appetite with all the ills it brings in its train.

Only very general rules can be laid down, for the needs of human beings obviously vary. So far as food is concerned, for instance, the clever usually highly-strung person, predominantly ectomorphic in temperament, seems to need small frequent meals to replenish easily depleted energies; the muscular type,

predominantly mesomorphic, usually needs three good meals a day to provide fuel for the physical activity through which he finds fullest expression; the placid endomorph, on the other hand, is often better with two meals only or even one. Each needs to discover for himself how his body functions most efficiently.

Similarly, reasonable discipline, suited to the particular individual, is needed to resist the softening influences of civilization. In general, walking as much as is possible short of fatigue, getting enough fresh air, avoiding overclothing or sitting in over-heated rooms proves its own reward. No ostentatious hardihood is necessary but each must work out for himself the way to alert well-being.

Very often this is merely a matter of taking thought; of pausing a moment to consider—before taking the extra serving or the odd cigarette or the second drink or the extra coat or the hot-water bottle—whether one really requires it. A little deliberation and resolute combating of habit will make it possible, little by little, to develop that fresh, cool, clear, clean feeling that is the mark of the body adequately fed but not surfeited, cared for and sufficiently protected but not pampered.

For fullest efficiency the body needs not only to be provided with what it needs—rather than what it has learned merely to want; it must also be *used* as its structure indicates.

During the last sixty years or so, the late F. Matthias Alexander has demonstrated that good health depends

on active functioning and that function in its turn depends to a much greater extent than was previously realized on posture. His work has proved so important that Prof. Raymond Dart has called it 'a step forward in evolution'.

By looking into his throat with the aid of mirrors, Alexander discovered that faulty speech habits alone were responsible for a persistent laryngitis that was holding up his stage work. The usual drugs did nothing to relieve it but when he learned to use his throat muscles as their structure implied they should be used, he was able to cure himself. He then proceeded gradually to observe every part of the body minutely, from the same point of view, first teaching himself, then others, how to use it intelligently.

He taught his pupils how to sit and to stand in such a way that the spine is stretched to the fullest possible extent. If the back muscles are allowed to sag, the body tends increasingly to telescope and the whole mechanism, which depends on the central flexible backbone, is thrown out of kilter. Once get the idea that the spine must be elongated to the fullest possible extent, the shoulders widened and kept at right angles (neither hunched forward nor, equally undesirable, drawn back exaggeratedly) and you are well on the way to basic good posture. The arms fall into their correct slightly relaxed position, the palms facing inward; the weight of the body is distributed equally between the two feet, the longitudinal and transverse arches of each supporting it firmly yet resiliently. Not only standing but walking then

becomes easy and pleasurable. Putting the heel down first and using the exquisite articulations of the ankle, first of one foot, then of the other, to transfer the weight to the bases of the toes (instead of using the feet lazily as solid slabs as is too often the habit), movement becomes light and graceful.

Incorrect alignment, on the other hand, leads not only to fatigue but to a host of other ills. Stiff joints predispose to arthritis. Slipped disc, that increasingly common complaint of today, caused by the crowding out of the vertebrae from a spine not long enough to accommodate the full number is one of the conditions that may result. A classic case of the cramping of the vital organs from lack of sufficient stretch was that of Bernard Shaw who was cured by Alexander of an angina pectoris that had defied standard medical treatment. When the hunched posture that had become habitual in sitting long hours writing at his desk was corrected, the heart had, for the first time for years, the room it needed to beat fully.

Alexander taught his pupils to breathe properly, lifting the ribs by means of the intercostal muscles designed to do this and thus employing the lungs and aerating the blood to the fullest possible extent. This results in a buoyant feeling of well-being not alone due to the physical effect of abundantly aerating the blood, but has a spiritual effect too for breathing is an important means of absorbing Prana, the Universal Energy.

Sound breathing habits, also, call that important muscle, the diaphragm, into play and it conserves or

regains its function of massaging the liver, pancreas and spleen. The intestines, lifted by the upward action of diaphragm and the abdominal muscles, are kept in proper trim. Various common digestive disturbances are then avoided.

A normal erect position—which is quite a different thing from a tense, stiff, over-compensated one—also has its important psychological effects. When you stand upright, lightly but firmly on your own two feet, with eyes looking level at the world—not peering upwards when any difficulty is likely to appear larger than it really is nor cast downwards, restricting vision—one gets a correct view of the environment and can cope better with the various challenges it offers. An erect posture thus induces an attitude of adequacy and confidence whereas a strained, tense, cramped one predisposes to mental tensions. *It is actually a fact that mental tensions cannot exist in the absence of bodily tensions.* Here is an important clue to developing courage and avoiding worry.

Surely this is an excellent reason for taking the trouble to use our bodies correctly, relieving ourselves of the unnecessary stresses induced by slumped postures.

Why do these arise in the first place? Why does man—as animals never do—tend to develop a stance that lays him open to fatigue and discomfort and nervous strain and ill health?

In the first place, because he has had to learn to stand on two feet instead of four. Since his weight is no

longer distributed between fore- and hind-quarters, gravity exerts a longitudinal pull. Nevertheless, the human toddler is usually a model of deportment. Look at his straight little spine, the head balancing so lightly yet firmly upon it. Look at the way he squats so easily and effortlessly, spine still straight, hands free to make mud-pies. But gradually he begins, as the discouragements of life begin to bear upon him, to resist the pull of gravity—and grows too often into the lumbering adult.

Schools that have used Alexander's methods find that this does not happen among their pupils. They retain their limberness and the closely associated, courageous, forthright attitude to life. The same holds true for adults who use their bodies as their structure clearly implies they should be used.

If you are fortunate enough to find an Alexander teacher in your neighbourhood, you will find a course of instruction in this essentially modern method of physical, mental and emotional culture well worthwhile. It is quite amazing how one becomes aware of stresses previously unrecognized and learns how to relieve oneself of them.

Those who have to get on without a teacher will benefit from Karen Roon's book, *The New Way to Relax*. This is more simply written than any of Alexander's own books, the style of which is difficult and involved. It provides guidance to living in such a way that both the body and the mind it houses may become a more responsive instrument of the spirit.

It may seem a counsel of perfection to give such

painstaking attention to everyday actions. It is difficult, initially, because 'greedy end-gaining', to use Alexander's term, has taken the place of attention to the means whereby we achieve our ends. To take one common instance, most of us pay no attention to the way we walk in our preoccupation with arriving at our destination. One of the weaknesses of human nature, not only on the physical plane, is to turn means into ends. Yet unless we enjoy doing and being in themselves, the basically wholesome attitude to living is lost. When the correct habits of using the body are established and become habitual, however, joy in life—both physical and emotional—increases.

It is reasonable, surely, to give intelligent care to the intricate and marvellous machine upon which, during this phase of our existence, we so intimately rely? The healthy sentient body correctly aligned is not only 'a storehouse of pleasurable sensation' but an important means to the greater end of significant living.

Call that true piety that most removes
Earth's aches and ills; when one is moderate
In eating and in resting and in sport
Measured in work and act; sleeping betimes
Waking betimes for duty . . .
That man is wise
Who keeps the mastery of himself; if one
Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs
Attraction; from attraction grows desire,
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds
Recklessness; then the memory, all betrayed

Lets noble purpose go and saps the mind
Till purpose, mind and man are all undone.
But if one deals with objects of the sense
Not loving and not hating, making them
Serve his true self that rests supremely Lord,
Lo, such a man comes to tranquillity!³

Enigma of Suffering

The general problem of how pain and suffering can exist, or even originated, in a universe pervaded by an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God; in a universe, moreover, which provides such abundant evidence of love and beauty, remains unsolved.

That suffering, as has so often been pointed out, is frequently brought on ourselves; that much of it is the direct result of man's inhumanity to his brother, provides only a partial answer. Pain and deprivation frequently appear to do no good and, on the other hand, they often come to those who seem least to deserve it.

We have to admit, in the end, that our human view cannot solve the riddle. Yet, Vivekananda has remarked, 'it is surely unreasonable to attempt to judge the God who lives from everlasting to everlasting by our two minutes' stay on earth'.¹ We are part of a general scheme too big for us to understand; our view essentially lacks perspective. John Custance gives an instance of this in his book, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly*: 'My good is the evil of the plague bacillus that attacks me. I may say that Providence should not have allowed bacilli harmful to human beings to evolve at all but how do I know

what function they serve in the general scheme of things? Or whether evolution would be possible without them?'²

It is worth noting that this man, after years of suffering, writes unequivocally that, could he live his life over again with all the distress it has brought him, he would not seek to change it. Many of us, looking back at the course of our lives objectively, come to the same conclusion, having extracted from our experiences the understanding that, in retrospect, we dimly begin to perceive they have helped to develop.

We can see that such experiences are, in the nature of things, unavoidable. 'If the universe consists of active choosing individuals, who can be influenced but not controlled, for God is not a dictator,' writes Professor Radhakrishnan, 'conflict is inevitable. To hold that the world consists of free spirits means that evil is probable and possible. The alternative to a mechanical world is a world of risk and adventure. If all tendencies to error, ugliness and evil are to be excluded, there can be no seeking of the true, the beautiful and the good. If there is to be an active willing of the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness, then the opposites of error, ugliness and evil are not merely abstract possibilities but positive tendencies we have to resist. The suffering and struggle involved are thus revealed as a necessity for our evolution.'²

Both Jesus and Buddha seem to have accepted it as such. Both alleviated it whenever and wherever it was possible but, full of compassion though they

were, neither lured their followers into acceptance of their teachings by promising immunity from sorrow. Rather they indicated both the possibility of transcending it and, even more important, how to avoid causing it, by the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven or Nirvana within.

When consciousness develops beyond the limits of self into the Universal, confidence drives out fear. This does not depend on any assurance as to physical safety or material security but on the certainty of being able to cope with whatever may come.

Ouspensky expressed this in his *In Search of the Miraculous*. This book clearly reflects the hazardous conditions under which he was living at the time of writing it yet he is able to testify to a confidence that 'is not self-confidence in the ordinary sense, quite the contrary; rather it is confidence in the unimportance and insignificance of self, that self we usually know. . . . If something terrible happened, like the things that have happened to my friends during the last year, then it would not be I that would meet it, not the ordinary I, but another that would be equal to the occasion . . . not the ordinary small I which is now speaking and which can be made afraid nor by anything like it but by another, by an I which nothing can frighten and which would be equal to anything that happened. I cannot describe it better but for me it is a fact.'

Confidence in that which is greater than our human selves results in a constructive attitude towards the suffering of others. Schweitzer manifested this when

he tackled the misery all about him at Lambarene, strengthened by the inner conviction of love at the heart of things. He expresses this in brilliant analogy. 'There is an ocean,' he writes, 'cold water without motion. In this ocean, however, is the Gulf Stream, hot water flowing from the equator toward the Pole. Enquire of all scientists how it is physically imaginable that a stream of hot water flows within the ocean that forms its banks, the moving within the motionless, the hot within the cold. No scientist can explain it. Similarly there is a God of Love within the forms of the universe—one with Him yet so totally different. *We let ourselves be seized and carried away by that vital stream.*'

The italics are mine. In that last phrase, the whole position is summed up. We have to choose between cowering, abject or rebellions, before the apparently ruthless Power that sustains and creates the universe: or gaining, through devotion and meditation and service, some understanding of the God within all fleeting forms. By making the constructive choice, by concentrating upon the evidences of love and beauty and goodness that exist in a universe which inevitably also manifests the opposite, we are enabled both to cope with our own suffering and to do what lies in our power to alleviate that of others.

Freedom Through New Perspective

The Perennial Philosophy does not reveal the ultimate mystery of existence but it does provide the *immediate* data for significant present living. It indicates its purpose—the development of spiritual awareness and understanding. It throws light upon the real nature of human beings and shows how they may realize their spiritual potentialities by consciously contacting the Divinity within and pervading them.

The emphasis is upon here and now. Do we need, in any case—once we know, with the certainty engendered by meditation that we have nothing to fear—to speculate as to what comes after? Can we hope to do so with any accuracy? As Professor Radhakrishnan has commented with reference to an after life, we do not really know what we want or want what we know. Life uninfluenced by bodily sensation is unimaginable.

What we do need—once the stage of evolution at which the material fails to satisfy is reached—is to know that this phase of our existence has meaning in relation to the whole. Without such conviction, the most pleasurable experiences pall, the happiest days seem vaguely incomplete. It is the certainty, outcome of constructive meditation, that our identity

and the identity of those we love both persists and is part of a greater enduring whole, that makes life worth living. 'Once our soul realizes her ultimate object of repose in Brahma,' writes Tagore, 'all her movements acquire a purpose. It is the ocean of infinite rest that gives significance to endless activities.'¹ Repose in this sense implies neither inaction nor extinction. It indicates rather the peace that passes understanding that can be attained in the present and even during our busiest moments, the peace of a wider consciousness that may at times elude us yet can through meditation be regained.

Paul Brunton describes this 'inner sense of utter satisfaction, of lacking nothing, of perfect contentment. Your desires have come to rest in the Overself like tired children. Here is a calm unbroken and eternal not dependent on the state of your finances nor on the state of world peace but only on the Eternal Reality which is ever-present within yourself. . . . If pleasant things come your way, you can still enjoy them; if they do not and troubles come, peace will not be lost. From that peace there is no return . . . you will carry it with you wherever you go.'

As spiritual awareness increases, boredom and restlessness vanish. So does the inner loneliness all of us know, surrounded by friends though we may be, until we come to live in the constant consciousness of the 'One in All Things'. For while we cannot hope to comprehend It, it is sufficient to know that It exists and, through meditation, to establish rapport with It.

That each one of us is alone in the human sense becomes increasingly apparent with the passing of the years. The parents who once seemed all-wise and all-powerful gradually reveal their human fallibility. Our children grow up to make their own lives as we ourselves have done. Old friends are removed by circumstance from our orbit. We may be bereaved of the one we love above all others. Then it is that we may be driven, like the Prodigal Son, to arise and go to our Father.

Understanding now that all experience holds meaning, the bitterest sense of loss is assuaged. The hazards, disappointments and sorrows of life are understood to be basically educative. We no longer regret past mistakes and their inevitable consequences too bitterly.

We realize, too, that death for ourselves and others is merely a transition. 'For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun. And what is to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides that it may rise and seek God unencumbered?'²

When man is understood as potentially divine—'a little soul bearing up a corpse', as Epictetus expressed it—not only does the whole outlook broaden but the common psychological disabilities disappear. The inferiority complex and the superiority complex, its obverse face, are banished in the only basically effective way. Such complexes, productive of so much misery, can adhere only to the limited personality, can never be part of the enduring identity.

Our new consciousness of this enables us to come to terms with ourselves as we are, visualize and strive to realize ourselves as we might be. We tend to look with a kindlier, more discerning eye on the inadequacies of others as upon our own, knowing that their struggles are essentially similar to ours.

Those who have been accustomed to associate religion with the grisly pictures of future torment and rather crude pictures of future bliss that, as Dean Inge points out, have been too much used in times past to encourage well-being and restrain from ill-doing may question the absence of any reference to arbitrary reward or punishment in the Perennial Philosophy. The old idea of a God of Vengeance dies hard, partly because this traditional image is too often emblazoned on the mind very early in life and even more perhaps because there really is something in human beings that not only makes them uneasy of 'getting by' but makes them distrustful of others who, freed from the traditional fears, appear to be doing so.

Yet to satisfy the inherent feeling of justice that characterizes man, whatever stage of enlightenment he may have reached, we only have to realize that though a vengeful God increasingly appears to be but a figment of man's imagination, every action has its reaction and every cause its result, in the spiritual no less than the physical realm. To rely upon the unconditional goodness of the Power behind the universe and upon its supporting presence does not mean that human effort is of no avail nor that man

can transgress with impunity. 'We cannot placate the nature of things.'³ The recognition that our well or ill-being depends to a great extent on our own actions surely renders superfluous, however, any of those threats of the everlasting bonfire that have so often been employed to keep us from the primrose path.

Those who believe in a god made in man's material image may object that this philosophy formulates one too vague and formless. Yet to admit that no conception that is at all adequate can be formed of the Ultimate is not to undervalue the conception of a personal God (manifesting to an infinite degree, the best we can discover in ourselves) within the Ultimate. It is rather to admit with the fourteenth-century mystic, Richard Rolle, that: 'He only knows God perfectly that knows him to be beyond knowledge. We cannot know *what* God is. It is enough for us to know *that* God is.'

Upon realization of this essential fact and upon our understanding of the real nature of man depends both our peace and our well-being. 'By constant recollection as to who they really are, equally by recognizing that every object encountered is a symbol of Divinity and every created thing its temple, human beings can be brought to a state in which, because there are no longer any God-eclipsing obstacles between themselves and Reality, they are able to be continuously aware of the Divine Ground of their own and all other beings; secondarily, as a means to this end, to meet even the most trivial circumstances of daily living without malice, greed,

self-assertion or voluntary ignorance but consistently with love and understanding.'³

By developing this essential wisdom we can find the inner peace that alone can assuage our present anxieties, permitting each to make his infinitesimal but indispensable contribution to the peace of the world.

All that doth live, lives always!

. . . That which is

Can never cease to be. . . Indestructible,

Learn thou, the life is, spreading Life through all;

It cannot anywhere, by any means,

Be anywise diminished, slayed or changed.

. . . Life cannot slay! Life is not slain!

Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never.

Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!

Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit
forever.

Death hath not changed it at all, dead though the house of
it seems.

. . . I say to thee, weapons reach not the Life;

Flame burns it not, waters cannot o'erwhelm

Nor dry winds wither it. Impenetrable

Unentered, unassailed, unharmed, untouched

Immortal, all-arriving, stable, sure,

Invisible, ineffable, by word

And thought uncompassed, ever all itself

Thus is the Soul declared!

Sir Edwin Arnold: *Song Celestial*.

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